

COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

Objects	114 objects from the Benin collection of the Wereldmuseum (formerly the National Museum of World Cultures) ¹ as described in Appendix 1.
Current owner	The State of the Netherlands
Custodian	Wereldmuseum
Application for restitution from	The Federal Republic of Nigeria represented by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments ²
Date of application for restitution	13 September 2022
Recommendation number	NG-2024-1
Date of recommendation	11 October 2024
The Colonial Collections Committee ³ consisting of Secretariat	Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You (chair), Laura van Broekhoven, Remco Raben, Alicia Schrikker (members) Jona Mooren, Meehea Park

1. The application

On 13 September 2022 the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria submitted an application to the Dutch State Secretary for Culture and Media for restitution of objects from Nigeria, so-called Benin Bronzes, from the collection of the Wereldmuseum. The provenance history of these object is connected to the British-led attack on and looting of Benin City in 1897. The objects whose restitution has been requested are from the former Kingdom of Benin, now part of Edo State in Nigeria.

¹ The National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), comprising the former Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Afrikamuseum in Berg en Dal and the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, changed its name to Wereldmuseum in October 2023.

² The NCMM is an agency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria responsible for the preservation, promotion and development of Nigeria's cultural heritage. Olugbile Holloway is the director general of the NCMM and Babatunde Adebisi is its legal director.

³ The Advisory Committee on the Restitution of Cultural Objects from a Colonial Context (in short: the Colonial Collections Committee) was established on 6 September 2022 by the Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science.

2. The objects and scope of the recommendation

The application for restitution concerns objects which were taken during the British attack on and looting of Benin City in 1897 and are currently held in the Wereldmuseum collection. The restitution application describes the significance of the objects as follows: “The antiquities for which we seek their return represent important epochs in the history of Benin, they are the record of Benin history as Benin did not have the art of writing and these objects represented transgenerational impartation of cultural and religious information. The objects were also used in ancestral worship until the invasion of Benin in 1897 by British soldiers when the objects were taken to Europe.”

The application comprises a variety of objects in the Wereldmuseum which have become internationally known as Benin Bronzes. They include plaques and statues as well as objects made of other materials, such as carved elephant tusks and jewellery.

In *Loot. Britain and the Benin Bronzes* Barnaby Phillips writes of the British attack in 1897: “The British had taken control of an all-but-deserted city. ‘The whole population, which must have numbered some thousands, had fled away into the bush,’ said an officer. In fact, some elderly people, women and children remained, but the Oba and his chiefs were nowhere to be seen. (...) The British picked up whatever they could carry, and took it to the Oba’s council chamber and a central courtyard, next to their makeshift staff headquarters and hospital. For the Edo, the shrines and plaques were a record of history, spiritual beliefs and artistic progression over the centuries; effectively Benin’s national library, cathedral and museum. But for the British, they were instruments of the Oba’s power and of the practice of human sacrifice, both of which they were determined to end. They did not bother to record how many pieces they took, where they found them within the palace, which pieces belonged to which altar, or the relative position of shrines or altars. It was a moment of vandalism, a rupturing of tradition and knowledge, that scholars of Benin’s art and history have spent many decades trying to repair.”⁴

The provenance report, which will be discussed in more detail in section 5, describes a larger group of objects than those to which this recommendation relates. Appendix 1 lists the 114 objects held by the Dutch State to which this recommendation relates. A separate procedure applies to six objects held by the Municipality of Rotterdam. Appendix 2 describes which objects are not included in this recommendation and what subsequent process will be followed for these objects.

3. The policy framework

The assessment in this recommendation was made within the framework of the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* of the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science.⁵ The Policy vision is based on the Council for Culture report *Colonial Collection, a Recognition of Injustice*.⁶ Applications for restitution of a cultural object may be made by states where the Netherlands exercised colonial rule for an extensive period of time.

⁴ Barnaby Phillips, *Loot. Britain and the Benin Bronzes*, Oneworld Publications, London, 2021, pp. 86-88

⁵ Policy vision, 29 January 2021,

<https://committee.kolonialecollecties.nl/procedure/publications/publications/2021/01/01/policy-vision-on-collections-from-a-colonial-context>

⁶ Report of 7 October 2020, <https://www.raadvoorcultuur.nl/documenten/adviezen/2021/01/22/colonial-collection-and-a-recognition-of-injustice>

The assessment framework set out in the Policy vision can be summarised as follows:

First the Committee determines whether the provenance research is satisfactory.

Then the Committee establishes whether involuntary loss of possession occurred. To this end it assesses whether it can be established with a reasonable degree of certainty that possession of the cultural object whose restitution is requested was involuntarily lost in a country where the Netherlands exercised colonial rule for an extensive period of time. If it is established that this is the case, the Committee will recommend unconditional restitution of the cultural object.

If it cannot be established from the provenance history whether involuntary loss of possession occurred, and to the extent that the cultural objects in question are of particular cultural, historical or religious significance for the country of origin, then the Committee will consider the interests involved, whereby the importance of restitution for the country of origin shall be weighed against other relevant interests based on reasonableness and fairness.

Relevant interests may include the cultural importance of the cultural object to the country of origin, the communities involved both in the countries of origin and in the Netherlands, the significance to the Netherlands Collection, future storage conditions and public access. Objects may be significant for national and regional traditions as well as for the identity of a country, people, community or individual. A colonial cultural object will often be of different importance to the Netherlands than to the country of origin. Colonial cultural objects in Dutch museums may also be of special significance to Dutch citizens with roots in the countries of origin.

If the object whose restitution is requested originates from a country that was colonised by another power then the Committee will similarly consider the interests involved, thereby weighing the importance of restitution for the country of origin against other relevant interests based on reasonableness and fairness. This does not alter the fact that in the case of a cultural object where the loss of possession was involuntary, the basic premise of the assessment must be to rectify the injustice. In this case, whilst the Netherlands did not cause the injustice, as the current holder of the objects it is the only party that is able to rectify that injustice.

If the Committee recommends restitution to the applicant state then the transfer of title procedure for public collections shall be observed – in accordance with the Dutch Heritage Act and the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* of the State Secretary for Culture and Media – and the Committee's recommendation shall also be regarded as a recommendation on the indispensability and irreplaceability of the object in the sense of article 4.18 of the Dutch Heritage Act.

4. The procedure

On 13 September 2022 the NCM of the Federal Republic of Nigeria submitted an application to the Dutch State Secretary for Culture and Media for restitution of Nigerian objects (so-called Benin Bronzes) in the Wereldmuseum collection which are connected to the attack on and looting of Benin City by the British in 1897.

On 17 November 2022 the State Secretary requested the Committee to advise on the restitution application. The Committee's recommendation is based on the provenance research conducted by the Wereldmuseum.

This research took place before the start of the advisory procedure and was conducted by Rosalie Hans, at the time a provenance researcher at the Wereldmuseum, Henrietta Lidchi, the then Head of

research and collections at the Wereldmuseum, and Annette Schmidt, Africa Curator at the Wereldmuseum. In 2021 they published *Provenance #2 The Benin collections at the National Museum of World Cultures* (hereinafter referred to as: the provenance report), which was shared with the NCMM at that time.

On 10 February 2023 the Committee spoke to Wayne Modest, Director of Content at the Wereldmuseum, who indicated his support for the restitution policy. On 28 June 2024 the Committee spoke to Mirjam Hoijsink, Head of research and collections at the Wereldmuseum, and Annette Schmidt, Africa Curator at the Wereldmuseum. They emphasised that they consider it of the utmost importance to be able to contribute to restitution in the context of rectification of injustice. The Wereldmuseum pointed in this context to the work of the Benin Dialogue Group (BDG), of which the museum has been a part since 2020. This is a multilateral collaborative working group that brings together partners in Nigeria and museums that possess objects in their collections that are connected to the British-led attack on and looting of Benin City in 1897. In addition to cooperation the group aims to establish a museum in Nigeria for the permanent display of the Benin objects.

On 8 May 2023 and 9 September 2024 the Committee held video conferences with the NCMM during which it explained the advisory procedure. The NCMM confirmed that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is applying for restitution of objects from the Kingdom of Benin that were looted during the military expedition of 1897 and confirmed that it had no further questions in relation to the provenance report provided by the Wereldmuseum.

The Committee discussed the restitution application on 9 February 2024 and 11 October 2024 and resolved to recommend as stated below.

5. The provenance research

In 2021 the Wereldmuseum conducted provenance research into ‘the Benin collections at the National Museum of World Cultures’. The report of the provenance research and the associated Corrigenda are attached to this recommendation as Appendices 3 and 4. The report is an integral part of this recommendation.

The authors of the provenance report showed that there is a connection between the objects in the collection and the military campaign of 1897 by British forces against Benin City, in what is now Edo State in Nigeria.⁷ During the attack buildings were looted including the palace of the Oba (the King), the palace of the Iyoba (the Queen Mother) and the residences of other high-ranking individuals. Following the British capture of Benin in 1897 the then ruler, Oba Ovonramwen, was exiled to Calabar.⁸

Bronze statues, plaques, carved tusks and other precious items were seized by British forces and divided between the British Crown and individual officers.⁹ In the years following 1897 numerous objects were brought to auction in Nigeria and London as well as being sold through art dealers elsewhere. The provenance report shows that the buyers – including the Dutch museums involved – were aware that the objects were connected to the British attack on and looting of Benin City. The

⁷ Appendix 3, p. 12.

⁸ Appendix 3, p. 22.

⁹ The provenance report uses the term ‘the British Crown’. The Crown encompasses both the monarch and the government.

researchers of the Wereldmuseum articulate the interconnectedness between colonial warfare and the looting of objects as follows:

“In the context of colonial warfare, looting was not an exceptional event. It was an integral part of the machinery of British imperialism that compensated for the cost of warfare and was used to finance military actions. It was moreover a means of rewarding soldiers and officers, who themselves acquired objects on the battlefield and at auction. The British government and its military forces presumed that cultural heritage property taken in war belonged to the British Crown. British forces used several systems to profit from, and disperse property seized: the value of looted material could be sold at auction by a prize agent, effectively a valuer and auctioneer who represented the Crown and had the responsibility to set up the auction.”¹⁰

In the provenance report the researchers divide the objects from the museum’s Benin collection into the following categories:

- ‘Link proven to the 1897 British military campaign’, 113 objects¹¹
- ‘Likely link to the 1897 British military campaign’, 10 objects¹²
- ‘Unlikely link to the 1897 British military campaign’, 46 objects
- ‘No link to the 1897 British military campaign’, 5 objects
- ‘Missing’, 10 objects

This division into categories is based on archive and art historical research. This recommendation only looks at objects in the categories ‘proven’ – where it is highly likely that they are connected to the military campaign of 1897 – and ‘likely’ – where there is a likely connection with the British military action.¹³

The date of acquisition by the museum or previous owner was an important indicator for inclusion in a particular category given that prior to the British campaign exceedingly few objects from the Kingdom of Benin were to be found in Europe, according to the provenance report:

“The movement of artworks into European collections was extremely limited before 1897 and very lively after 1897. Factoring this in and acknowledging the trading links between West Africa, Great Britain and Germany that resulted, we propose that those items entering into NMVW collections between 1897-1918 are a direct consequence of the events in 1897.”¹⁴

Much information regarding acquisitions by the Wereldmuseum and its predecessors has been preserved, including correspondence, making it possible to identify dealers.¹⁵ The inventory lists, correspondence and publications concerned contain a large amount of information about the acquisitions. Archives of other museums involved, businesses and several private individuals were also examined.

¹⁰ Appendix 3, p. 22.

¹¹ The four objects in this category held by the Municipality of Rotterdam are the subject of a separate recommendation.

¹² The two objects in this category held by the Municipality of Rotterdam are the subject of a separate recommendation. The three objects belonging to the collection of the Wereldmuseum Berg en Dal and the Congregation of the Holy Spirit are not included in this recommendation, see Appendix 2.

¹³ Appendices 1 and 2 specify for each category which objects the recommendation relates to and what procedure applies to the other objects.

¹⁴ Appendix 3, p. 23.

¹⁵ Appendix 3, p. 20.

The provenance research revealed that in the years following the capture of Benin City many art objects ended up in the hands of dealers, who found a ready market in European museums. In many cases the objects had come from people who were involved in the attack.

Some of the 113 objects which are ‘proven’ to have been looted in Benin City in 1897 ended up in the Wereldmuseum collection via the British ethnographic art dealer William Downing Webster (1868-1913) and the German dealer Johann Friedrich Gustav Umlauff (1833-1889).¹⁶ Other objects came via H. Bey & Co, a German trading company based on the Nigerian coast which sold several Benin Bronzes in the immediate aftermath of the British raid. Objects were acquired via the London-based dealer Gustav Adolph Frank¹⁷ (1844-1900) which had already been displayed in the British Museum in 1897. Other objects acquired can be traced to one of the large auctions of Benin Bronzes that were organised in London shortly after the military action or were offered via an art dealership or company with trading posts in Nigeria.

In addition to archive research the provenance report also contains art historical research. Stylistic characteristics enabled objects to be attributed to the Kingdom of Benin and a specific production period.

Stylistic characteristics are also an important indicator with regard to the 10 objects in the ‘likely’ category which ended up in the museum at various points in time after 1918. Along with the provenance information provided by the seller or gleaned from archive research the stylistic characteristics make it likely that the objects were looted during the 1897 military expedition in Benin City.¹⁸ The provenance research also involved consulting external museum databases, from which it emerged that similar objects that can be found in other European museums are also considered to have come from the Kingdom of Benin.¹⁹

6. Assessment of the restitution application

First the Committee examined the admissibility of the application from the Federal Republic of Nigeria, with regard to which it considered as follows. The application for restitution of cultural goods was submitted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigeria is a former colony of a different power than the Netherlands, namely Great Britain. In 2020 the Dutch Council for Culture’s Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections recommended that applications for the restitution of cultural heritage objects held by the State of the Netherlands from countries that had been colonised by *other powers* should also be considered.²⁰ This recommendation was adopted in the policy framework.²¹ The Committee therefore concludes that the application falls within the scope of the restitution policy as set out in the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context*.

Next the Committee looked at whether the provenance research into the objects is sufficient. The Committee is of the opinion that the provenance research, as outlined in section 5, was conducted properly and provides a satisfactory basis for issuing a recommendation. The museum conducted

¹⁶ Appendix 3, pp. 36-47

¹⁷ Appendix 3, pp. 33-36

¹⁸ Appendix 3, p. 59.

¹⁹ Appendix 3, p. 62

²⁰ Report of 7 October 2020, <https://www.raadvoorcultuur.nl/documenten/adviezen/2021/01/22/colonial-collection-and-a-recognition-of-injustice>

²¹ See *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context*, appendix to *Kamerstukken II 2020/21*, 32820, no. 405, pp. 5-6.

thorough research into the acquisition and provenance of the objects from the Kingdom of Benin, with the time of acquisition and the relevant dealer or collector and their area of operation having been identified in many cases. External museum databases, archive sources and literature were also consulted in the course of the research. The report provides sufficient information regarding the origins of the objects from the Kingdom of Benin and their transfer to the Netherlands. The Committee is therefore of the opinion that the provenance research is sufficient.

The Committee also looked at whether involuntary loss of possession occurred and then at whether a broader consideration may need to be taken with regard to this. The Committee follows the *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context* in this: “The colonial powers maintained intensive contacts, both in Europe and in the former colonies. These international contacts of the past are also evident in the collections of today, with cultural objects from territories that were colonised by other powers for example having ended up in the Dutch National Art Collection via trade and collectors. To accommodate the specific nature of each case I also adopt the recommendation to take a broader consideration here, albeit that rectifying injustice must be the basic premise in the assessment. In this case the injustice was not caused by the Netherlands but as the current holder of the objects only the Netherlands can rectify that injustice.”²²

With regard to whether the loss of possession was involuntary the Committee considers as follows. In February 1897 the British mounted a punitive expedition against Benin City. In the course of this expedition buildings were looted, including the palace of the Oba (the King), the palace of the Iyoba (the Queen Mother) and the residences of other high-ranking individuals.

The provenance research takes a detailed look at how the Wereldmuseum acquired objects in the years following the attack on Benin City. Bronze statues and other precious items were divided up between the British Empire and individual officers and sold for cash via art dealers or auctions. Selling spoils of war was one of the ways in which colonial warfare was financed.²³ Using archive and art historical research the museum was able to link the objects to the military expedition of 1897. The provenance report concludes that it is highly likely that these objects are connected to the British attack on Benin City in 1897.

Provenance details on objects acquired by the museum later in the 20th century are in some cases less complete. However, based on the provenance information and stylistic characteristics it is likely that these objects were taken from Benin City at the time of the military expedition of 1897.²⁴ This conclusion was reached based on the archive research in conjunction with art historical information on the objects.

Based on the above grounds the Committee is of the opinion that it is either very likely or likely that the objects listed in Appendix 1 were involuntarily lost in a country where another power exercised colonial rule for an extensive period of time.

Next, the Committee broadened its consideration given that the object is from a former colony of a power other than the Netherlands. The Wereldmuseum has indicated that it considers it of the utmost importance to contribute to restitution in the context of the rectification of injustice and does not oppose restitution to the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Since 2010 the Wereldmuseum has been

²² See *Policy vision on collections from a colonial context*, appendix to *Kamerstukken II 2020/21*, 32820, no. 405, pp. 5-6.

²³ Appendix 3, pp. 21-22.

²⁴ Appendix 3, p. 59.

part of the Benin Dialogue Group, a multilateral collaborative working group which aims to establish a museum in Nigeria for the permanent display of the Benin objects.

In its application the NCMM emphasises on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that the objects represent an important period in Benin's history: "they are the record of Benin history as Benin did not have the art of writing and these objects represented transgenerational impartation of cultural and religious information."

The objects also play a role in ancestral worship, a significance which remains relevant today. The Federal Republic of Nigeria wants to display the objects in museums "to teach youths their history so that they may have pride in their nation."

Given the basic premise of rectifying injustice, the circumstances under which the requested objects were acquired is a major factor. The provenance report shows that it was already clear at the time of acquisition that these objects had come from the punitive expedition and that the loss of possession by the Kingdom of Benin had been involuntary. In this case the involuntary loss of possession was not caused by the Netherlands but by another coloniser. However, as the current holder of the objects only the State of the Netherlands is in a position to rectify that injustice.

The Committee is of the opinion that a reasonable consideration of the foregoing facts and circumstances means that rectification of injustice prevails in the assessment and the objects ought to be restituted to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Committee was asked to advise on the application of article 4.18 of the Dutch Heritage Act should its recommendation be in favour of restitution of the requested objects. It is the opinion of the Committee that rectification of past injustice prevails in this case, meaning that article 4.18 of the Heritage Act is not applicable.

7. The recommendation

The Committee has assessed the application for restitution and recommends that the Minister proceed with the unconditional restitution of 114 objects from the Benin collection of the Wereldmuseum which are held by the Dutch State, as specified in Appendix 1, to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

This recommendation was adopted by the Colonial Collections Committee on 11 October 2024.

Chair

Secretariat

Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You

Jona Mooren and Meehea Park

Appendices

1. List of objects
2. Objects not included in this recommendation
3. Provenance report
4. Corrigenda

COLONIAL COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

APPENDICES TO THE RECOMMENDATION

Appendix 1

The Committee recommends the restitution of 114 objects from Nigeria, so-called Benin Bronzes, which are held by the Dutch State in the collection of the Wereldmuseum and which are connected to the capture of Benin City by the British in 1897. Of these objects, 109 belong to the 'proven' category and five to the 'likely' category.

The numbering follows the catalogue in the provenance report.

Proven:

RV-1243-11, RV-1164-8, RV-1164-9, RV-1243-4, RV-1243-5, RV-1863-28, RV-1170-1, RV-1170-2, RV-1170-3, RV-1170-4, RV-1243-38, RV-1243-27, RV-1295-7, RV-1243-26, RV-1295-6, RV-1243-29, RV-1286-6, RV-1243-28, RV-1164-10, RV-1243-10, RV-1243-43, RV-1286-5, RV-1243-12, RV-1355-3, RV-1243-8, RV-1355-1, RV-1355-2, RV-1163-2, RV-1164-4, RV-1164-2, RV-1164-3, RV-2668-445, RV-1286-1, RV-1243-33, RV-1310-7, RV-1243-41, RV-2668-436, RV-1335-4, RV-1243-46, RV-1163-1, RV-2668-444, RV-1243-6, RV-1243-7, RV-1243-45, RV-1310-3, RV-2668-433, RV-2668-434, RV-1243-22, RV-1243-23, RV-1310-4, RV-2668-432, RV-1164-7, RV-1310-5, RV-2668-442, RV-2668-443, RV-1164-6, RV-1164-5, RV-1243-14, RV-1243-13, RV-2668-435, RV-2668-437, RV-2668-438, RV-2668-439, RV-2668-441, RV-1243-32, RV-1295-2, RV-1243-1, RV-1286-8, RV-1243-24, RV-1243-35, RV-1243-31, RV-1243-40, RV-1163-3, RV-1243-30, RV-1243-39, RV-1243-20, RV-1243-21, RV-1286-4, RV-1310-2, RV-1243-25, RV-1164-1, RV-1170-5, RV-1243-16, RV-1243-17, RV-1243-18, RV-1243-34, TM-1772-2018, RV-1286-3, RV-1295-5, RV-1335-1, RV-1295-4, RV-1335-2, RV-1335-3, RV-1286-7, RV-1286-9, RV-1243-9, RV-1243-42, RV-1243-36, RV-1310-6, RV-1243-44, RV-1243-37, RV-1355-4, RV-1286-2, RV-1355-5, RV-1295-3, RV-1148-1, RV-1286-10, RV-1243-2, RV-1243-3 (109 objects)

Likely:

RV-2799-2, RV-2837-1, RV-2975-1, RV-2771-3, TM-2289-3 (five objects)

Appendix 2

Objects in the provenance report to which the recommendation does not apply:

- Objects held by the Municipality of Rotterdam
The six objects in the Wereldmuseum which are owned by the Municipality of Rotterdam are the subject of a separate recommendation.
Proven: WM-15984, WM-15983, WM-15985, WM-15986 (four objects)
Likely: WM-23485, WM-73123 (two objects)

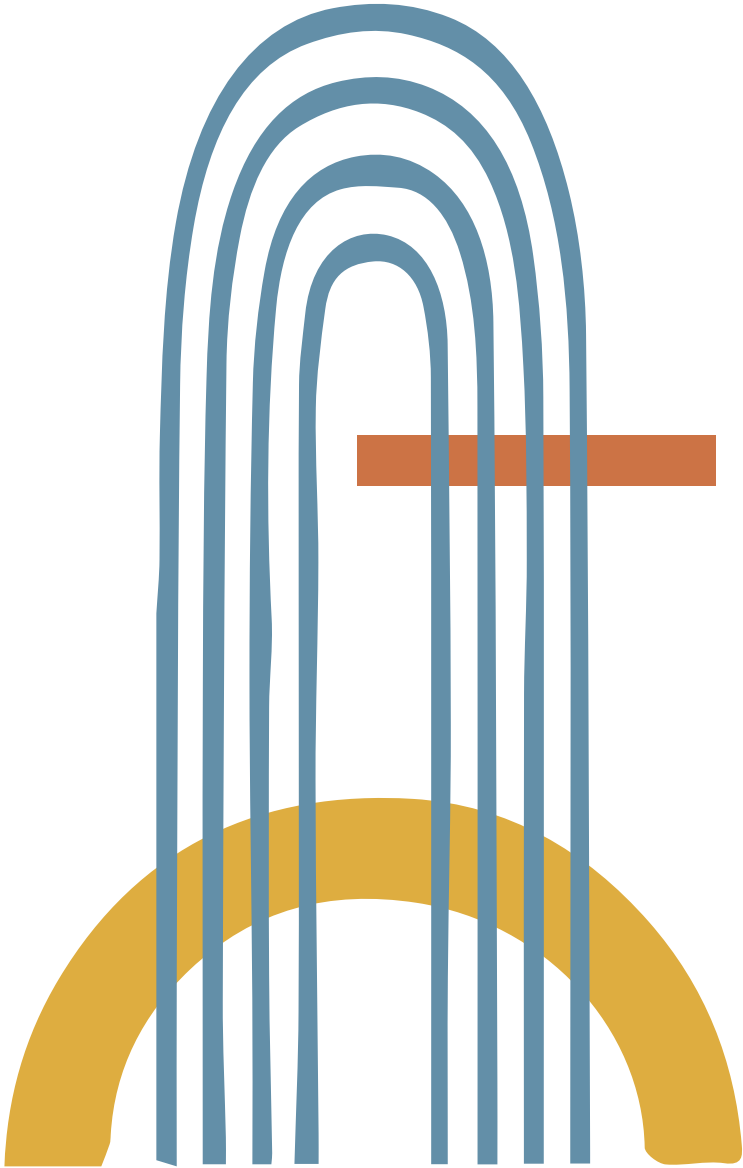
- Category 'unlikely'
This category comprises objects of which the Wereldmuseum concludes that it is 'unlikely' that they were looted during the military action in 1897. Some objects appear to have come from other parts of Nigeria while others were seemingly manufactured after 1897.
Restitution of these objects is not under discussion for now as this application for restitution concerns objects related to the punitive expedition of 1897. Should the Republic of Nigeria also wish to apply for restitution of these objects then that application will be dealt with separately.
Object numbers: AM-178-1, AM-192-5, WM-30268, RV-1985-8, RV-1985-4, RV-1985-1, RV-1985-2, RV-1985-3, RV-1985-5, RV-1985-6, RV-1985-7, WM-67778, TM-3323-85, TM-3323-98, TM-3323-99, AM-11-12, AM-254-3, WM-29962, TM-3323-70, AM-17-43, AM-652-9, AM-652-10, TM-3323-90, TM-3382-1, WM-29726, WM-29727, WM-32519, TM-3323-91, TM-3323-67, TM-3323-68, TM-3323-71, TM-3323-72, TM-3323-92, TM-3323-84, TM-3323-102, AM-138-3, WM-23486 (a-d), AM-254-2, RV-1165-1, RV-1165-2, WM-8483, WM-8484, WM-44952, WM-29965, TM-3323-69, RV-4649-1.

- Category 'no link'
This comprises objects that the research found to have 'no link' to the 1897 expedition.
Restitution of these objects is therefore not under discussion for now. Should the Republic of Nigeria wish to apply for restitution of these objects for other reasons then that application will be dealt with separately.
Object numbers: RV-3467-29, RV-3467-30, RV-3467-31, RV-3467-32, RV-3467-33.

- Category 'missing'
This comprises objects which are missing and hence not eligible for restitution. Should these objects be traced then further research will be undertaken.
Object numbers: RV-1295-12, RV-1985-9, RV-1243-19, RV-1164-11, RV-1243-15, RV-RV-2668-440, TM-332-12, AM-198-4, RV-1310-1, WM-8485.

- Collection of Wereldmuseum Berg en Dal
Objects from the collection of the Wereldmuseum Berg en Dal and the Congregation of the Holy Spirit that belong to various categories in the provenance report are not included in this recommendation.
Category 'proven': no objects
Category 'likely': AM-254-1, AM-595-1, AM-673-35
Other categories: AM-178-1, AM-192-5, AM-11-12, AM-254-3, AM-17-43, AM-652-9, AM-652-10, AM-138-3, AM-254-2.

#2



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#2

The Benin collections at the National
Museum of World Cultures

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Provenance volume 2 was edited by Fanny Wonu Veys, curator Oceania at the National Museum of World Cultures and the Wereldmuseum Rotterdam

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Foreword

Henrietta Lidchi

The promise of sustained and synthesized provenance research is that it can start to identify the questions that urgently need to be answered in order to understand better the nature and history of museum collections.

If the focus of the first volume of this series was that of individual items in the collection, the emphasis of this publication is a collection – a product of a merger – that can be conceived as one collection because of its link to time and place, broadly described as the Benin collection. The question that drives this publication, and its primary focus, is understanding how the collection of artworks attributed variously to Benin in the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), the Netherlands, were acquired. In questioning the manner in which these artworks came into the collection, the task of this report is to assess the likelihood of the link between the items in the care of NMVW and the attack in 1897 by British-led forces on Benin City (Nigeria), Kingdom of Benin in current day Edo State, Nigeria.

As noted in the foreword to the previous volume, *Provenance*, under series editor Wonu Veys, is a means of making our research available and accountable. There is

no doubt that Benin collections have long been in the public imagination. The royal artworks from Benin City that emerged onto the market in the late nineteenth century represent the best-known instance of internationally renowned artwork entering public and private collections globally as a consequence of seizure under colonial duress. So, this publication offers an analysis of all that is currently known about the means by which the four museums that constitute the NMVW came by their collection.

This report is timely for a number of reasons, but two will be mentioned as they pertain to the Dutch national context, and NMVW in particular. The return of cultural heritage is the subject of engaged public discussion in the Netherlands, and in response to this, in March 2019, NMVW published a framework entitled *Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process* (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen 2019) which identified criteria on the basis of which claims for cultural heritage objects could be made. *Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process* has been shared with interested parties in Nigeria in 2018 and 2019. NMVW is a custodian of national collections and the Dutch State their owner. In consequence, all decisions as regards national collections require specific approval of the Minister of Education, Culture

and Science (Minister van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap).

NMVW's framework was approved as a pilot policy structure by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and shortly thereafter, in April 2019, its Minister, Ingrid van Engelshoven, asked for a national advisory committee to be constituted. It was to provide guidance on the way forward for colonial collections, and in particular provide recommendations as regards how to devise a policy on return.

The guidance finalised by the advisory committee was handed to the Minister on the 7 October 2020, entitled *Koloniale Collecties en Erkenning van Onrecht* (Colonial Collections and a Recognition of Injustice, Raad voor Cultuur 2020). The policy implications were being announced as editorial work was being undertaken on this publication (29 January 2021).

A number of important principles can be found in the full report, shorter summary recommendation, and the policy vision announced in January. Two are highlighted here. The first is that colonial relations constituted a systemic injustice that has been transformed over time into a material legacy held in museums. Museums are beholden to recognize this fact, to act as responsible custodians in regard to source countries and to engage in means of repair. Making provenance research accessible is a way of achieving this.

The second was that the committee could conceive that a return policy which actively included the idea of redress would, logically, consider the type of artwork seized under duress as the category of work that should be unconditionally returned. The committee opted to recommend unconditional return especially for cultural heritage objects from former Dutch colonies

seized with lack of consent or where the owners lost possession involuntarily, but accepted that a principle of redress was applicable more widely. This has been upheld by the policy vision announced in January 2021. In this context, this published research on the Benin collection is especially important, allowing that future conversation to happen.

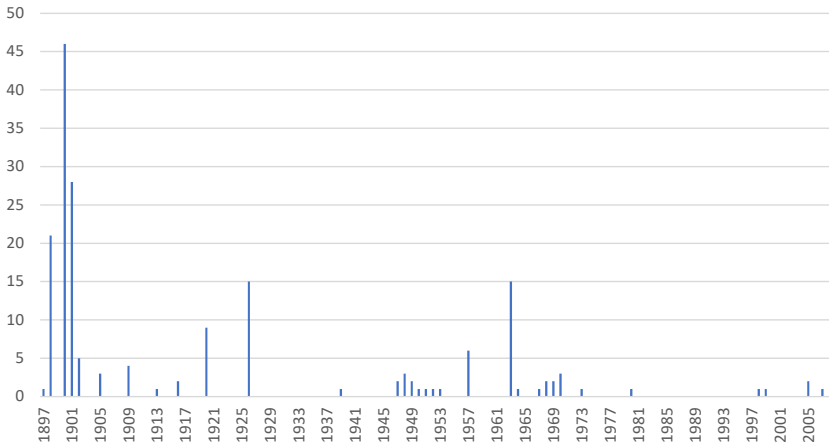
Introduction

Henrietta Lidchi and Annette Schmidt

In this report, we are publishing the current state of provenance research on collections linked to Benin City and the Kingdom of Benin, or Edo, in present-day Edo State, Nigeria managed by the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW), the Netherlands. This research has been undertaken to assess the strength of connection to the military campaign led by British forces against Benin City in early February 1897, during which Edo¹ cultural and ancestral objects were looted and then sold. This report is work in progress, undertaken to fulfil NMVW's goal to make current provenance research on sensitive collections as widely accessible as possible.

1 The Edo or Benin people is an ethnic group primarily found in Edo State, Nigeria. The members speak the Edo language and are the descendants of the founders of the Benin Empire. The name 'Benin' (and 'Bini') is a Portuguese corruption, ultimately from the word 'Ubinu', which came into use during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great, c. 1440. 'Ubinu', a Yoruba word meaning vexation, was used to describe the royal administrative centre or city or capital proper of the kingdom, Edo. Ubinu was later transliterated to Bini and further transmuted into Benin around 1485 when the Portuguese began trade relations with Oba Ewuare. Although Bini is also used to refer to the people, we prefer using Edo in this publication.

Number of artworks



In the national and international arena representatives of the Kingdom of Benin, as well as other representatives and advocates, have expressed the desire to have those collections linked to the British-led attack and looting of Benin City 1897 returned to Nigeria. NMVW has responded to this request for greater accountability on behalf of European museums by being part of the Benin Dialogue Group since 2010, hosting it in Leiden in 2018. Since 2018, we have been a member of the Steering Group and we are current members of the initiative to develop a digital platform to create a comprehensive database of the numerous royal art objects from Benin, called *Digital Benin: Reconnecting Royal Art Treasures*.

This publication focuses on provenance research as relates to collections that were formerly held

Table 1: Number of artworks acquired per year across the museum collections of the NMVW.

by four separate museums: the Tropenmuseum (TM), Amsterdam; the Museum Volkenkunde (RV), Leiden; the Afrika Museum (AM), Berg & Dal and the Wereldmuseum (WM), Rotterdam.

These four collecting institutions have different histories and archival trails. The earliest date (after February 1897) a Benin artwork was acquired is December 1897, although correspondence with the dealer started in September of that year. This, and the many other artworks acquired in the years directly after 1897, are linked to the Museum Volkenkunde (RV). Thereafter Benin artworks were acquired in the following order. The Wereldmuseum acquired its first artwork in 1905, the Tropenmuseum

in 1926. The Afrika Museum (which opened in 1954) started collecting Benin artworks in the 1960s. The last acquisitions were made by the Afrika Museum through donations in 2005 and 2007.

This publication is not ordered chronologically or by museum. It is ordered according to four categories which reflect the probable connection to the 1897 British-led attack on Benin City, and subsequent looting in accordance with detailed provenance research carried out by Rosalie Hans. These categories are:

- Link proven to the 1897 British military campaign against Benin Kingdom
- Link to the 1897 British military campaign cannot be confirmed but is likely
- Link to the 1897 British military campaign cannot be confirmed but is unlikely
- Proof that there is no link to the 1897 British military campaign against Benin Kingdom

Factoring in the circulation of collections before and after 1897, the changing political situation in Nigeria and Europe, we argue that those collections with a certain link to the attack on Benin City were acquired as NMVW collections between 1897-1918 (purchased from London or Hamburg). On the basis of current research, we conclude that NMVW holds 114 pieces that can be definitively connected to military campaign

led by British forces against Benin City in early February 1897. Art historical comparison and scientific analysis suggest that a further 9 items purchased on the art market at a later date, may well have been part of the collection in Benin City looted in 1897. NMVW will continue work to further verify this.

At this point in time, detailed analytical or art historical research has not been systematically carried out to date Benin artworks and this is not the central focus of this report. However, a catalogue is provided at the end with acquisition numbers for cross-reference and provide insight into the materiality of the artworks from the NMVW collections. Individual items in the catalogue are referenced as *cat.* throughout the publication.

In previous collections assessments, a number of pieces were given the attribute of 'inauthentic', as compared to Benin artworks on the market following 1897. Others have been associated with regions outside the Kingdom of Benin. NMVW will continue to review these assessments through art historical comparison and material culture analysis.

The provenance research is based on, but not confined to, archival evidence held by NMVW, as was discoverable up to the date of publication of this report, some archives for varied reasons remained inaccessible. Consistent with the way NMVW catalogues its collections, where multiple objects were acquired

in a series or from one person, they are discussed together. Indeed we have used the name of the collectors, galleries or sources of the collections as this will allow other researchers to use this provenance information to connect with their own findings. The catalogue as noted above will allow cross-referencing and is grouped according to types of artwork which

allows yet another way of searching the collection. Where necessary, translations into English have been provided from other languages. As this report is a work-in-progress we welcome further information linked to the provenance of the objects discussed in this report, such as details linked to acquisition-related persons, businesses or institutions.

Archival Museum Sources

Rosalie Hans

The available archival material of the National Museum of World Cultures formed the starting point for this research. As the archival sources are referenced throughout this publication, we are detailing them with their abbreviations below.²

One institution, four museums

The National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) consists of three museums merged in 2014: Museum Volkenkunde (Leiden), Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam) and Afrika Museum (Berg en Dal). Each museum location has kept its name, but the three museums operate as one. In addition, the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam has a collaborative partnership with the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) since 2017. The NMVW collections are national collections, owned by the Dutch

2 Due to the restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, some archives could not be accessed in person.

State. The Wereldmuseum collection is owned by the Municipality of Rotterdam.

The NMVW collection and the Wereldmuseum collection are described in The Museum System (TMS), the collection database, where 184 objects are identified as coming from Benin City and/or related to the Kingdom of Benin. Museum Volkenkunde (RV) held 135 objects, Tropenmuseum (TM) 18 objects, Wereldmuseum (WM) 18 objects and Afrika Museum (AM) 13 objects. Of the latter, originally 9 objects were on loan from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

Missing objects

Ten objects in the NMVW collection are now presumed lost, meaning they have not been located for a number of years. There are seven objects missing from the Museum Volkenkunde collection. A bronze bell (RV-1985-9) went missing before 1941. In 1958 a bronze model axe (RV-1295-12) and in 1991 a bronze figure (RV-1243-15) were reported missing. Between 1987 and 1994 a hip pendant (RV-1310-1; *cat.* 19.7) was lost and finally in 1994 three more objects were reported absent including an ivory figure (RV-1164-11; *cat.* 11.46), a bronze gunpowder container on a chain (RV-1243-19), and a figure (RV-2668-440). One small figure (TM-332-12) went missing from

the Tropenmuseum collection before 1947 and was officially deaccessioned in 2004. Before 2003 a brass cuff (AM-198-4; *cat.* 13.4) went missing from the Afrika Museum's loan collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. An additional piece (WM-8485) is not currently to be found in the Wereldmuseum. Actually, it seems that an elephant tail was misidentified as a paddle and no direct link to the Kingdom of Benin can be established.

Ownership

As a result of the institutional structure of the museums, explained above, not all artworks discussed in this publication belong to the 'rijkscollectie' or Dutch state collections. Of the 174 objects physically present in the museum holdings, 17 are in the Wereldmuseum and therefore owned by the Municipality of Rotterdam. Another 8, are in the loan collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the founders of the Afrika Museum, and are therefore privately owned by this ecclesiastical organisation. This brings the tally up to 149 items owned by the Dutch state of which NMVW is the custodian.

Museum Archives

For some object records old inventory cards and other information have been attached in the collection database

(TMS). This information has been mentioned where relevant. Each of the four museums has a different institutional history. This impacts the way in which documentation was kept and archives were managed. Therefore, a short explanation of each museum's archive is necessary to understand the research.

Museum Volkenkunde

The Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, was known before the merger under several names including Japansch Museum (1837-1859), Japansch Museum von Siebold (1859-1864), Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (1864-1931), Rijksmuseum van Ethnographie (1831-1935), Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (1935-2005) and with its current name since 2005. The Museum Volkenkunde is one of the oldest ethnographic museums in the world and was established in 1837. Records have been kept since its founding but archival systems have changed multiple times and for each object or collection series (multiple pieces registered at the same time) different documentation is available. The Leiden archives can roughly be divided into the collection archive and the correspondence archive. The collection archive consists of object registers, inventories, series dossiers, and for some of the older objects, lists of gifts and exchanges. These documents are found under

NL-LdnRMV_A3. The correspondence archive contains incoming letters and telegrams, carbon copies of outgoing letters, lists of incoming and outgoing correspondence etc. These are referenced as NL-LdnRMV-A1. Other documentation such as series dossiers and annual reports are also cited in this report. All collection archive sources are cited in the following manner:

Day book (*dagboek*) in Leiden: DB-L followed by the scan number where appropriate;

Museum register (*inventarisboek*) in Leiden: MR-L followed by the scan number where appropriate;

Exchange register (*register van ruilingen*) in Leiden: ER-L;

Annual reports (*jaarverslagen*) in Leiden: AR-L.

All correspondence archive sources are identified with the name of the writer except for:

Correspondence logbook (*Agenda In en Uit*) in Leiden: CL-L followed by the scan number where appropriate.

Tropenmuseum

Collecting for the predecessors – Koloniaal Museum and the Etnografisch Museum Artis – of what would later become the Tropenmuseum started in 1864 and was initially focused on Dutch overseas territories. This, and the transfer of almost its entire African

collection to the Museum Volkenkunde in 1947, explains why the collection related to the Benin Kingdom in this museum was mainly acquired after 1947. The name of this museum has also changed several times. For the purpose of this publication, it is useful to know that it was opened as the Koloniaal Museum on 9 October 1926 in its current location in Amsterdam. Between 1945 and 1950 it was called the Indische Museum before it was renamed the Tropenmuseum.

The archives are part of the larger archive of the KIT, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute) of which the museum was a part until 2014. As a national institution, its archive is kept in the National Archive in The Hague. Records prior to 1950 from this archive have been digitised by KIT and are available at the NMVW in the 'Media' module of the TMS collection database. Records after 1950 are in the process of being digitised in The Hague. Records after 1993, exclusively concerning the Tropenmuseum, are accessible on site in Amsterdam, and are currently being digitised by NMVW. Because of the process of digitisation, some of the physical records are currently unavailable. Inventory cards mentioned in the text are attached to the object record in the collection database. Correspondence is identified by the name of the writer, other

archival sources are cited by the type of document:

Museum register (*inventarisboek*) in Amsterdam, referenced as MR-A;
Annual reports (*jaarverslagen*) in Amsterdam, referenced as AR-A;
Acquisition register (*aanwinstenregister*), referenced as AQR-A.

Wereldmuseum

The Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde, known as the Wereldmuseum since 2000, opened in Rotterdam in 1885. It is a municipal museum and therefore the museum's correspondence archives up to 2005 are kept in the Rotterdam city archive (Stadsarchief Rotterdam). This archive is not digitised. Archival material related to the Wereldmuseum collection has also not been digitised. All inventory cards, object registers, annual reports and other collection-related documentation are kept in the Metaalhof collection depot in Rotterdam. Over the course of time, archival practices have been notably inconsistent. This is reflected in the amount of information that can be found. Where appropriate, the following abbreviations have been used:

Museum register (*inventarisboek*) in Rotterdam, referenced as MR-R
Annual reports (*jaarverslagen*) in Rotterdam, referenced as AR-R

Afrika Museum

Since the Afrika Museum was a private missionary museum at the time of its establishment in 1954, archives have been kept in a manner determined by the museum's own protocols. Information about objects in the Afrika Museum can be found in TMS, on the original inventory cards attached to the object entries, and in the hand-written object registers. However, correspondence is rarely available apart for some of the most recent acquisitions. The archives of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit are located in Erfgoedcentrum Kloosterleven in Sint-Agatha, but permission was still not granted to access this archive at the time of finalising this publication.

Note on terminology

To represent archival sources accurately, quotes are given using the precise terminology of that time period. In translations of quotes from other languages into English, the terminology has been translated as closely as possible to be consistent with provenance research. This means that sometimes the language reflected in the research consists of terms that NMVW would no longer use. For a discussion on language in ethnographic museums, this report refers to NMVW's publication *Words Matter: an unfinished*

guide to word choices in the cultural sector (NMVW 2018).

Publications about the Benin collections at NMVW

Since the Benin collections entered the various museums of NMVW, there have been a number of publications about one or several artworks. The following is a non-exhaustive list of publications for which the full references can be found in the bibliography.

Museum Volkenkunde

An important historical source for these collections is Joseph Marquart's book *Die Benin-Sammlung des Reichsmuseums für Völkerkunde in Leiden* published in 1913.

Von Luschan's 1919 authoritative book *Die Altertümer von Benin* refers to the Leiden collection on multiple occasions.

Based on a joint exhibition with the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna, the book *Benin: vroege hofkunst uit Afrika* (Benin: early court art from Africa) was published in 1990 with elaborate descriptions of a selection of objects from Museum Volkenkunde (Duchâteau 1990).

Tropenmuseum

The Tropenmuseum's own publication *Africa at the Tropenmuseum* discusses the plaque in its collection and a

number of provenance-related persons (Faber, Wijs & Van Dartel 2011).

Afrika Museum

In the book about the entire Afrika Museum collection, one of the Benin heads in the collection in 2002 is mentioned (Grootaers & Eisenburger 2002: 277).

Recent publications

The latest publication which mentions the NMVW collections is Dan Hicks's *The British Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (2020). In several appendices the different museums that are part of the National Museum of World Cultures are mentioned separately. We are answering Hicks's request to suggest corrections in the preface to his book. On page 252, in appendix 5, under the heading 'The Netherlands' the Museum for Land- en Volkenkunde Rotterdam is mentioned, however since 2000 its name is the Wereldmuseum. The Rijksmuseum van Oudheden does not have pieces from Benin Kingdom in its collection. However, the Afrika Museum, which is not mentioned, does

have a collection, and is discussed in this publication. There are a number of museums in the Netherlands, which may have objects from the Benin Kingdom in their collections, whether these were looted in 1897 is not yet established at this point in time.

Other archival sources

Next to internal museum archives a number of other regional and municipal archives have been consulted. Some pertain to other museums and others to persons connected to the acquisitions. Finally, a number of online resources have been used such as website *Delpher.nl*, a resource with digitised newspapers and magazines from different Dutch institutions. Other resources are *wiewaswie.nl* and *archieven.nl* and *archivesportaleurope.net* as starting points for regional, municipal and European archives. All used sources, both external archives, literature and internet websites, are mentioned in-text and referenced in the bibliography.

Collection Connections to the 1897 Military Campaign

**Henrietta Lidchi, Rosalie Hans and
Annette Schmidt**

Based on the archival evidence, a number of the 174 extant objects at the NMVW appear to have been looted during a military expedition to Benin City. The 'Benin Territories Expedition', more commonly known as the 'Benin Punitive Expedition' – was launched by the British in 1897 with Foreign Office approval. A British-led force under the command of the Royal Navy was composed of the Royal Marines, sailors and African soldiers of the Niger Coast Protectorate Forces. On 18 February 1897, British forces looted the Palace of the Oba, or king, of Benin, the palace of the Queen Mother (Iyoba) and the dwellings of the other high-ranking people. As a result, a large number of the artefacts in the NMVW collections can be associated directly with the royal court of the Kingdom of Benin, and many others with political and religious life in Benin City.

The ruler at the time of the looting was Oba Ovonramwen who had been leading the Kingdom of Benin since 1888 and was sent into exile to Calabar after he surrendered to the British in September 1897. The dynasty of Obas can be traced back to the fourteenth century and up to the current Oba Ewuare II who is the 40th person to hold this title (Girshick Ben-Amos 1995: 21; Wikipedia contributors 2020a). Another important courtier was, and is, the Queen Mother, or Iyoba. This is an honorary title first given by Oba Esigie (reign date 1504-1550) to his mother, queen Idia, who is remembered for being 'the only woman who went to war.' She was a powerful priestess who helped her son conquer his enemies and expand the kingdom (Kaplan 2007: 144). Oba Esigie built a palace at Uselu outside Benin City for the Iyoba and this tradition has been followed since then (Kaplan 1993, 55). In 1897, Iyoba Ehiya, the mother of Oba Ovonramwen, held the title. Currently, there is no living Iyoba, but Oba Ewuare II bestowed the title on his late mother, Princess Eghiunwe Akenzua, at his coronation in 2016 (Wikipedia contributors 2020b).

In the context of colonial warfare, looting was not an exceptional event. It was an integral part of the machinery of British imperialism that compensated for the cost of warfare and was used to finance military actions. It was moreover a means of

rewarding soldiers and officers, who themselves acquired objects on the battlefield and at auction. The British government and its military forces presumed that cultural heritage property taken in war belonged to the British Crown. British forces used several systems to profit from, and disperse property seized: the value of looted material could be sold at auction by a prize agent, effectively a valuer and auctioneer who represented the Crown and had the responsibility to set up the auction. This led to the division of 'prize money' in order of rank to serving military and naval forces, but equally to recoup the costs of a campaign. Property could also be seized as 'indemnity' in compensation for acts of resistance to British colonial power. As regards Benin artworks looted in the 1897 military action on Benin City, these were divided between the property of the Crown and the British naval and military officers, who received artworks according to rank (Spiers 2020: 30). Some of the artworks deemed Crown property (for example ivory tusks) were put up for sale on the Niger Coast Protectorate while other artworks (for example plaques) were sent to England for sale (Coombes 1994:59), although understanding the precise relationship between army and navy, Crown, Foreign Office and Admiralty remains work to be done (as shown by Hicks 2020:142-149).

Most of the artworks sent to London were immediately given up for auction by the Admiralty or sold by the Foreign Office (Plankensteiner 2007: 33, Hicks 2020: 142-149). William Downing Webster (1868-1913) became the primary dealer in London of Benin artworks, auctioning off a total of 562 objects between 1897-1901. He published catalogues that gave an impressive insight into the wealth and variety of the material sold (Plankensteiner 2007: 34). Christies held an important sale in 1899. The British Museum was the second UK museum to acquire Benin material (the first was the Horniman Museum and Gardens, also in London). The British Museum held a total of 315 plaques on loan from Foreign Office, and The British Museum acquired 203, the remaining were returned to the Foreign Office who sold them on. In addition to the British art market, where the Foreign Office sold its official spoils of war and where members of the expedition offered their Benin artworks, there existed a second, no less important sales route from the Niger Coast Protectorate that led directly to Hamburg. In Germany the first museum to acquire Benin artworks was the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg – that acquired in 1897 – and German collections quickly outpaced British collections. This route functioned via the intermediary of German trading


companies with settlements on the Niger Coast.

Our aim in briefly recounting the trajectory of Benin artworks from Nigeria to Europe is not to provide a detailed and comprehensive historical account. Rather it is to set a context for the analysis contained in this report.

In assessing the strength of connection between the NMVW collections and the 1897 British-led attack and looting of Benin City, we have used a number of factors. The most reliable link is accession/acquisition date. The movement of artworks into European collections was extremely limited before 1897 and very lively after 1897. Factoring this in and acknowledging the trading links between West Africa, Great Britain and Germany that resulted, we propose that those items entering into NMVW collections between 1897-1918 are a direct consequence of the events in 1897. Where there is some art-historical evidence, or there is evidence of artworks coming into the collections in the mid or late 20th century but with links to earlier collectors, dealers and institutions whose collections are known to have included collections from 1897, a probable link is traced.

For some of the NMVW collections no reliable link can be established to the Benin Punitive Expedition. For a number, the connection with the 1897 campaign seems unlikely as they do not appear to be from

Benin City, or were made after 1897. These conclusions were drawn using information available, such as date of acquisition, knowledge of the acquisition-related person and their personal and professional background, available museum documentation, object characteristics, and, where present, dating of external experts. In some cases, literature and other museum databases have been consulted for extra information. Dates of acquisition later than 1918 are considered less likely to be linked to the British military campaign but the factors mentioned above may make a production date pre-1897 or post-1897 more or less likely.



Link proven to the 1897 British military campaign

Rosalie Hans
with Annette Schmidt

The NMWW holds 115 objects, including carved elephant's tusks, bronze plaques, Oba's heads, pendants and figures that have a proven link to the military campaign of 1897. The objects entered the museum collections initially through traders in ethnographic materials from London and Hamburg, but also through exchanges with other museums and donations of private collectors. One object can be connected to named people in the royal court of Benin. Even though the Museum Volkenkunde was plagued by budgetary restrictions in the beginning of the 20th century, the then director Johannes Schmeltz managed to secure support through his fundraising activities. In so doing, he acquired collections from Webster, Umlauff and Von Luschan, collectors who were known to hold Benin City objects with secure provenance information.

A carved elephant's tusk from Ezomo's court

On 31 August 1897, 'Shell Merchant and Manufacturer of Seaside Novelties' M. Wolff wrote to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam with an offer of two 'elephant's tusks,' which he states are '4300 years old' and 'brought to England after having been captured in the palace of the king of Benin.'³ Most of the information known about Wolff comes from his letterhead (fig. 1). He wrote letters in Dutch, which may point to a connection with the Netherlands. A website about traders on Commercial Road in London in the 19th century, suggests that his first name was Maurice (St George-in-the-East Church 2020). On 3 September the director of the Rijksmuseum, Barthold van Riemsdijk, forwards the letter to the director of the Museum Volkenkunde, Johannes Schmeltz, stating: 'The 4300 year old elephants' tusks do not belong in my museum.'⁴

Later letters between M. Wolff, and Schmeltz show that negotiations for

3 Translated from Dutch: 'olifantstanden ... 4300 jaar oud ... naar Engeland overgebracht werden na buit gemaakt te zijn in het paleis des konings van Bénin' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-25-151).

4 Johannes Dietrich Eduard Schmeltz was the general curator at the RMV from 1882-1896 and served as director from 1896 to 1909; Translated from Dutch: 'De 4300 jaren oude olifantstanden behoren bij mij niet te huis' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-25-150).

the two 'elephant's teeth' started on 4 September 1897 but the potential sale was narrowed down to one tusk at the request of Schmeltz on 22 September, which was then sent on view to the Netherlands (NL-LdnRMV-A1-24-533). Because it was damaged during the journey to Leiden, Wolff charged only £46 instead of the original £50 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-24-536). This acquisition was very early, as only in November 1897 William Downing Webster, the British ethnographic dealer who traded a large number of objects from Benin City, offered his first two tusks for sale for £80 each in his catalogue (Plankensteiner 2007: 21-40). Moreover, Schmeltz paid less than the market value at the time. Nevertheless, in his letters M. Wolff describes payment difficulties on the part of the museum (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-312/313).

The tusk arrived on, or shortly before, 11 December in Leiden (NL-LdnRMV-A1-24-532 to -536, NL-LdnRMV-A1-24-543). The original museum register does not give additional provenance information (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_045_0031), but the day book shows the artwork (RV-1148-1; *cat.* 27.1) was registered on 21 December 1897 (DB-L: LdnRMV_A03_007_0207). The museum was well aware that objects from the Benin expedition might come on the market: 'From the Kingdom of Benin, as a result of the punitive expedition of the English, the art treasures have



emerged, which Dapper had already mentioned in his [publication] “Afrika” and of which the existence used to be doubted.⁵

The art historian Barbara Blackmun suggests that carved elephant tusks already existed in the late eighteenth century as between 1778 and 1787 the French Captain J.F. Landolphe made several trips to Benin City where he and his party described carved tusks in different places, evidence that figural carving was widespread on ancestral ivories by the 1780s (Blackmun 1991:

5 Translated from Dutch: ‘Uit het Koninkrijk Benin zijn tengevolge van de strafexpeditie der Engelschen, de kunstschatten voor den dag gekomen, waarvan reeds Dapper in zijn “Afrika” gewaagde en aan wier bestaan vroeger getwijfeld werd’ (AR-L 1897-1898: 19); Olfert Dapper (1636-1689) was a Dutch physician and writer whose book ‘Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten’ (translated as ‘Description of Africa’) written in 1668, contains a description and engravings of the Kingdom of Benin, its art and architecture. He never travelled to the African continent himself but relied on the descriptions of others (Molhuysen, Blok & Kossmann 1927: 354-355; Haitsma Mulier & Van der Lem 1990).

Figure 1: Letterhead correspondence from M. Wolff. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, NL-LdnRMV-A1-24-532.

57). Blackmun identifies the museum’s tusk (RV-1148-1) as one that probably belonged to the court of Ekeneza, who in 1787 held the hereditary title of Ezomo, the Oba’s highest ranking military chief (Ezra 1992: 109). Ekeneza would have commissioned the tusk for an altar for his grandfather Ehenua. Blackmun (1991) elaborates on her analysis of the original owner and location of the tusk and dates it between 1760 and 1786 based on the depictions that she has identified as commemorating historic battles. She states: ‘The conjunction of oral tradition and documentary history suggests that the four large, worn tusks of Set E:I [which includes RV-1148-1] are remnants from this paternal altar, commissioned sometime between 1760 and 1786’ (Blackmun 1991: 58). Blackmun made the following comments in the museum database: ‘It is a rare piece. On this tusk the ‘double trunk-hand

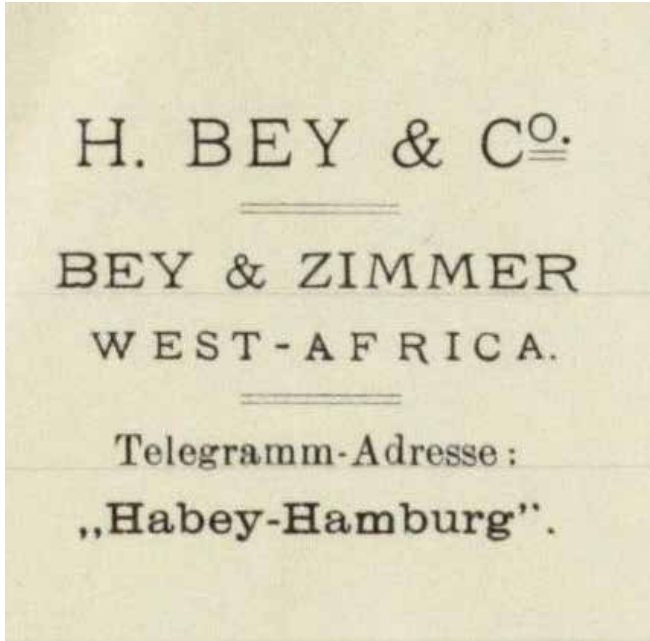


Figure 2: Letterhead of incoming letter on 25 March 1898 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-29).

emblem' is carved, a symbol that indicates that Ezomo was the owner. There are only four tusks known in the world that carry this symbol. They all belong to Set E:1, which has six tusks in total. These are located in: Mannheim (IV AF 4833), Leipzig (MAF 285), Stuttgart (4671), British Museum (NN6), Minneapolis (56.33) and Leiden (RV-1148-1). The 'double trunk-hand motif' appears on four of these six, namely the one in Leiden, Mannheim, Leipzig and the British Museum.⁶

6 Translated from Dutch: 'Het is een zeldzaam exemplaar. Op deze tand staat bijvoorbeeld het 'double trunk-hand emblem', een symbool dat aangeeft dat de Ezomo eigenaar was. Er zijn slechts vier tanden op de wereld bekend,

Connections through Justus Brinckmann

In 1898, the Museum Volkenkunde acquired fourteen artworks through the intermediary of the German lawyer Justus Brinckmann (1853-1915) who was the founding director of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg, which was established

... die dit symbool dragen. Deze behoren allen tot Set E:1, die bestaat uit zes tanden. Deze bevinden zich in: Mannheim (IV AF 4833), Leipzig (MAF 285), Stuttgart (4671), British Museum (NN6), Minneapolis (56.33) en Leiden (1148-1). Het 'double trunk-hand motif' komt voor op vier van deze zes, namelijk die uit Leiden, Mannheim, Leipzig en het British Museum' (Wijis 1999).

Figure 3:
Newspaper
clipping entitled
'The Oil Rivers
Commissionership'
that mentions the
trading company
Bey and Zimmer
(The Times 1891).

In the Benin the African Association have two principal factories, besides the hulk Victoria, trading further up the stream. At Warreo, in the interior, this company also has two factories. Messrs. Ellis, Kislisbury, and Co., of London, James Finnock, Punch and Powis, and A. Miller, Brother, and Co. have also one establishment each in Benin district, and Messrs. Bey and Zimmer (German) have a small business also. A staff doctor is always maintained in Benin River by the African Association. The Telegraph Company's station is at Forcados, at the mouth of the river, where also the African Association have a beach and small depôt, at present unused.

in 1877. He remained director until 1915 (Wikipedia-Autoren 2020b, MKG Hamburg 2020).

Letters from 14 March and 29 March 1898 confirm the offer of 11 of the fourteen pieces from the Hamburg Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe run by Brinckmann (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-63/65, NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-66).

On 25 March 1898, the Museum Volkenkunde received a letter in which Brinckmann is referenced. It came from the trading company Bey and Co., also known as Bey & Zimmer and stationed on the Nigerian coast (fig. 2). The trading company wanted to sell three Benin bronzes, one cockerel, one head, and a hip pendant (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-29; see Nzemeke 1988, Akinwumi 2002). The company was one of four important 'principal trading firms on the Benin River' as becomes clear from the petition written in April 1896 that Bey & Zimmer undersigned. The petition implored the British Vice-Consul of the Benin River District to

take action against Oba Ovonramwen (reign date: 1888-1897) because he had stopped all trade in that area (Igbafe 1970: 392-393). Bey & Co. was well-known for having good access to Benin art as newspaper clippings show (fig. 3, fig. 4). In addition, the article by Nevadomsky, Půtová and Soukup (2014: 82) on Benin art and casting technologies states that 'there was another trade route directly to Hamburg. It was run by salesmen from German trading companies such as Bey & Zimmer with branches in Lagos, Sapelea and Warri.'

The next letter from Bey and Co. on 29 March 1898 states that the three offered Benin bronzes will cost fl. 450.⁷ The company asks for immediate payment 'because we have to sell the things for the account of

7 The value of 450 Dutch guilders equals around €6300 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

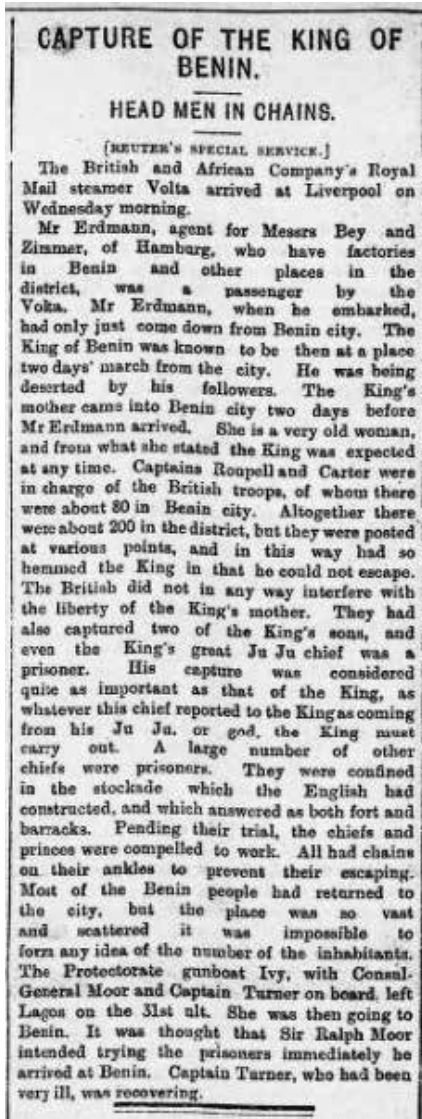


Figure 4: Bey & Co is mentioned in an article about the capturing of the Oba of Benin (Reuter's 1897).

a gentleman in Africa.⁸ Brinckmann thus connected the then director of Museum Volkenkunde, Schmeltz, to Bey & Co. Pre-dating the trading company letter, Brinckmann already advised on 14 March 1898, to make direct contact with Bey & Co because, in contrast to the rest of the objects he offered (series RV-1164), these three bronzes did not belong to the Hamburg Museum (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-63/65, NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-66). Brinckmann remarks that the smaller pendant (RV-1163-3) is 'very noteworthy'⁹ (fig. 5). The bronze cockerel (RV-1163-1) is described as 'one large bronze figure, which probably served as decoration at the top of the roof of an important person.'¹⁰

The day book, the museum register and the annual report confirm that the three bronze objects (RV-1163-1 to -3; *cat. 8.1, 11.1, 19.1*) and the eleven Hamburg Museum objects (RV-1164-1 to -11; *cat 2.1-2, 5.1, 8.2-4, 11.16, 11.23-24, 11.46, 21.1*) were sent to Museum Volkenkunde as one batch and arrived from Hamburg on 28 March 1898 (DB-L: LdnRMV_A03_007_0211, MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_

8 Translated from German: 'da wir die Sachen für Rechnung eines Herrn in Africa zu verkaufen haben' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-30, also see NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-29 to -31).

9 Translated from German: 'sehr merkwürdig'.

10 Translated from Dutch: '1 groote bronzen haan, waarschijnlijk tot versiering van den nok van het huis van een aanzienlijke gediende hebbende' (AR-L 1897-1898: 19).



Figure 5: A small bronze pendant. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, RV-1163-3.

A03_045_0044, LdnRMV_A03_045_0045; AR-L 1897-1898: 19-20). The acquisition happened 'as a result of the friendly intervention of Prof. Dr J. Brinckmann, Director of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg.'¹¹

A number of letters were exchanged between 13 January 1898 to 20 June 1898 about the objects. Brinckmann writes to Schmeltz on 20 January 1898 and the transcription is provided in the chapter 'Die Bronzen

11 Translated from Dutch: 'tengevolge van de vriendelijke tusschenkomst van Prof. Dr.

...J. Brinckmann, Directeur van het Museum van Kunstnijverheid te Hamburg' (AR-L 1897-1898: 19).

aus Benin: Herkunft und Geschichte' written by Silke Reuther (2018):

From Benin quite a few good pieces have arrived for us today by steamer of the Engl. Africa Line. We now have more than I and Dr. Hagen need. Let me know how much money you can make available. Then I will make you an offer and send the items or photographs for inspection. A large rooster, a head, one or two plates appear to be deliverable and some small bronzes. Let me know your opinion soon, otherwise I intend to go to Vienna.¹²

The pieces Brinckmann intended to sell had arrived on the steamship *Sherbro* in the harbour of Hamburg in January. As Reuther (2018: 36) elaborates, the ship belonged to the British and African Steam Navigation Company from Liverpool, which shipped numerous pieces from Benin City to Hamburg on their service between West Africa and Hamburg. The Lagerbuch, or stock ledger, in

12 Translated from German: 'Aus Benin sind heute noch etliche gute Stücke mit dem Dampfer der engl. afrik. Linie für uns eingetroffen. Wir haben nun mehr als ich und Dr. Hagen brauchen. Sagen Sie mir wieviel Geld Sie flüssig machen können. Dann werde ich Ihnen ein Angebot machen und die Sachen selbst oder Photographien zur Ansicht schicken. Abgebbar erscheinen ein großer Hahn, ein Kopf, eine oder zwei Platten und einige kleine Bronzen. Lassen Sie mich bald Ihre Meinung wissen, ich beabsichtige mich sonst nach Wien zu wenden' (Reuther 2018: 39).

which Brinckmann as an intermediary kept track of his acquisitions and sales of Benin artworks, shows that Ernst Heinz, most probably a crew member of the S.S. *Sherbro*, sold a bronze head to Brinckmann. It seems plausible this commemorative head (possibly RV-1164-2) was later purchased by the Museum Volkenkunde (Reuther 2018: 36; Lagerbuch 1897-1900 MKG Hamburg). On 18 February 1898, the Lagerbuch lists pieces that Brinckmann got from Albert Thomsen, who Reuther (2018: 40) describes as a ship chandler having excellent contacts with all ships in the harbour and probably trading as a middleman. Seven of these items are marked as having been sold to Leiden. The handwritten Lagerbuch does not allow for further identification of which objects in the RV-1164 series came from Thomsen (fig. 6).¹³

The Austrian doctor, anthropologist and ethnographer Felix von Luschan, who was assistant director of the African and Oceanic section at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin in 1897 (Eisenhofer 1997: 62) disapproved of Brinckmann acting as an intermediary for Leiden (and possibly others) in the trade of Benin bronzes. This is described by the anthropologist Gisela Völger who states, based on a German letter from April 1898: 'On top of that Brinckmann has several Benin-bronzes shipped to

13 MKG Archiv, Ausländ 15. Mus., 1883-1958, L, Leiden, Ethnograph. Mus./Rijksmus.



Leiden, for the museum over there! Whether these bronzes came out of the Schmidt-collection I could not determine, because I tried to avoid any confrontation with Brinckmann' (Völger 2007: 218). Von Luschan himself was one of the most prolific buyers of Benin artworks for the Berlin museum and the author of the important work on the Benin collections 'Die Altertümer von Benin' (1919).

Gustav Adolph Frank: curatorial negotiations

On 1 February 1898, the London based natural history dealer Gustav Adolph Frank brought the 'Benin

Figure 6: The rendering of the object numbers and the rooster, which is not in the NMVW collection, indicate that this photograph was provided by Brinckmann. The Lagerbuch from MKG Hamburg shows that similar numbers were used for items sold to the Museum Volkenkunde (Lagerbuch 1897-1900 MKG Hamburg). Photograph taken by B. Grevel, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, RV-11113, 3424.

bronzes' to the attention of Schmeltz, director of the Museum Volkenkunde (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-98/99). Eventually the Museum Volkenkunde and the Tropenmuseum would buy respectively 21 objects and 35 objects from Frank including five from Benin City (RV-1170-1 to -5). Frank had followed in

the footsteps of his father, also named Gustav Adolph Frank (1809-1880) who was a natural history dealer in Amsterdam with worldwide trade connections (Wikipedia contributors 2020c). The younger Frank was born on 30 October 1844 in Amsterdam in the Vijzelstraat (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief. 1874-1893). He married Ellen Alberta Brown on 11 June 1872 in London, which appears to show that he moved there from the Netherlands (Algemeen Handelsblad 1872). The online Civil Registration index shows that G.A. Frank died between April and June 1900 in Hampstead (FreeBMD 1998-2018). While corresponding with the museum, Frank lived on 9 Haverstock Hill, London. This biography explains why most of his correspondence with the museum was in Dutch.

Of the initial three pieces on offer, Schmeltz chose a plaque, which was according to Frank 'possibly the finest piece that came from Benin.'¹⁴ The asking price was £50. A letter from 6 April 1898 provides evidence that Frank sent four arm rings to Leiden as part of his offer (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-100/101).¹⁵ The day book testifies to the arrival of '4 copper arm rings from Benin (?)

and a bronze plate with depiction in relief from the palace of Benin.'¹⁶ The question mark indicates that Schmeltz doubted the provenance of the arm rings, simply listed in the museum register as 'Afrika, Benin' without the question mark (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A01_045_0049). Frank took offence at the suggestion that the arm rings (RV-1170-1 to -4; *cat.* 3.1-4) might not be from Benin in a letter dated 13 April 1898. He writes: 'Neither do I understand that the arm rings and bronze ornament would come from another region. As they were sold with other Benin pieces.'¹⁷ In a later letter from 3 May 1898 the conversation about the origins of the arm rings continues. Frank writes: 'I am completely convinced that you are mistaken about the small Benin ornament. It is clearly not fake or imitated. I believe that apart from mine there are only 2 others in existence, from a trader I receive £5 for it, and it has been sold to Rivers Pit [*sic*], who saw it before. I also send you the photos of one of the

14 Translated from Dutch: 'wellicht het fraaiste stuk dat van Benin is gekomen' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-99).

15 Answering correspondence from Schmeltz to Frank is available at NL-LdnRMV-A1-206-1.

16 Translated from Dutch: '4 koperen armingen van Benin (?) en een bronzen plaat met voorstelling in reliëf uit het paleis te Benin' (DB-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_007_0212).

17 Translated from Dutch: 'Evenmin begrijp ik niet dat die bracelets en bronzensieraad uit een andere streek zouden komen. Daar zij met Benin voorwerpen verkocht werden' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-94/95).

two other items.¹⁸ It is possible that Schmeltz cast doubt on the origin of the arm rings in order to lower the price. However, the arm rings could genuinely have originated from other areas in Nigeria considering that the twisted shape and decorations differ from other arm rings identified as being from the Benin Kingdom.

The plaque (RV-1170-5; *cat.* 21.2) was part of the 315 relief plaques that arrived from the British Foreign Office in September 1897 and were displayed in the British Museum. In 1898, a sale was organised at the British Museum of the 112 plaques that the museum had not selected. Even though it was initially assumed that the plaques

loaned to the British Museum in 1897 would be acquired by the museum, a year later, over a third of the plaques were sold with the profits going to the Foreign Office (Coombes 1994: 59, Lundén 2016: 163).

A photographic album in the British Museum containing all the plaques that were sold at the auction in 1898 shows that the Museum Volkenkunde relief plaque (RV-1170-5) was one of these. The numbers on the objects (17 for this relief plaque) were assigned by the Foreign Office but were also used by Charles Hercules Read, the curator at the British Museum at the time, and are sometimes known as the 'Read numbers.' Documentation accompanying the photographs of the sold plaques shows that this object was bought by 'Cutter', most likely Eva Cutter (Fig. 7). She is known to have been Webster's business partner and a dealer in her own right: 'In the 1890s Eva Cutter took over Webster's trading business, and in 1898, when the museum was selling three hundred plaques from Benin, she purchased nearly forty examples' (Waterfield & King 2006: 59).

In personal correspondence between the director Schmeltz and Felix von Luschan, then assistant director of the African and Oceanic section at the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, the latter mentions RV-1170-5 and asks: 'Have you thought about what the man

18 Translated from Dutch: 'Ik ben geheel overtuigd dat u zich over dat Benin ornamentje vergist. Het is bepaald niet valsch of nagemaakt. Ik geloof dat behalve het mijne er nog maar 2 andere bestaan van een handelaar ontvang ik er £5 voor, en het is aan Rivers Pit verkocht, die het vroeger gezien heeft. Hiernevens zend ik u de photographie van een der twee andere exemplaren en ik meen dat dit het voorwerp uit Berlin is ook wordt mij verklaard dat de armbanden ook uit Benin komen' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-96/97); 'Rivers Pit' is the incorrect spelling of the name Pitt Rivers. Augustus Pitt Rivers was also a collector of Benin objects (among many other collections) and the founder of the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford. There are indeed similar arm rings in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, the oldest date of entry in the collection being 1900, see for example: Pitt-Rivers Museum 2012b; More correspondence from G.A. Frank between 25-1-1899 and 17-10-1899, mainly about payment, is available (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-104/105, NL-LdnRMV-A1-27-86, NL-LdnRMV-A1-29-171/187).

Fate of the Benin bronze plaques.

1	Ben	32	Trans. Office	63	Rel. House	94	Ben	125	Ben	156	Ben
2	Ben	3	Ben	4	Ben	5	Ben	6	Ben	7	Ben
3	Ben	4	Ben	5	Ben	6	Ben	7	Ben	8	Ben
4	Rel. House	5	Ben	6	Ben	7	Ben	8	Ben	9	Ben
5	Ben	6	Ben	7	Rel. House	8	Ben	9	Ben	10	Ben
6	Ben	7	Ben	8	Ben	9	Ben	10	Ben	11	Ben
7	Ben	8	Ben	9	Ben	10	Ben	11	Ben	12	Ben
8	Ben	9	Ben	10	Ben	11	Ben	12	Ben	13	Ben
9	Ben	10	Ben	11	Ben	12	Ben	13	Ben	14	Ben
10	Ben	11	Ben	12	Ben	13	Ben	14	Ben	15	Ben
11	Ben	12	Ben	13	Ben	14	Ben	15	Ben	16	Ben
12	Ben	13	Ben	14	Ben	15	Ben	16	Ben	17	Ben
13	Ben	14	Ben	15	Ben	16	Ben	17	Ben	18	Ben
14	Ben	15	Ben	16	Ben	17	Ben	18	Ben	19	Ben
15	Ben	16	Ben	17	Ben	18	Ben	19	Ben	20	Ben
16	Ben	17	Ben	18	Ben	19	Ben	20	Ben	21	Ben
17	Ben	18	Ben	19	Ben	20	Ben	21	Ben	22	Ben
18	Ben	19	Ben	20	Ben	21	Ben	22	Ben	23	Ben
19	Ben	20	Ben	21	Ben	22	Ben	23	Ben	24	Ben
20	Ben	21	Ben	22	Ben	23	Ben	24	Ben	25	Ben
21	Ben	22	Ben	23	Ben	24	Ben	25	Ben	26	Ben
22	Ben	23	Ben	24	Ben	25	Ben	26	Ben	27	Ben
23	Ben	24	Ben	25	Ben	26	Ben	27	Ben	28	Ben
24	Ben	25	Ben	26	Ben	27	Ben	28	Ben	29	Ben
25	Ben	26	Ben	27	Ben	28	Ben	29	Ben	30	Ben
26	Ben	27	Ben	28	Ben	29	Ben	30	Ben	31	Ben
27	Ben	28	Ben	29	Ben	30	Ben	31	Ben	32	Ben
28	Ben	29	Ben	30	Ben	31	Ben	32	Ben	33	Ben
29	Ben	30	Ben	31	Ben	32	Ben	33	Ben	34	Ben
30	Ben	31	Ben	32	Ben	33	Ben	34	Ben	35	Ben
31	Ben	32	Ben	33	Ben	34	Ben	35	Ben	36	Ben
32	Ben	33	Ben	34	Ben	35	Ben	36	Ben	37	Ben
33	Ben	34	Ben	35	Ben	36	Ben	37	Ben	38	Ben
34	Ben	35	Ben	36	Ben	37	Ben	38	Ben	39	Ben
35	Ben	36	Ben	37	Ben	38	Ben	39	Ben	40	Ben
36	Ben	37	Ben	38	Ben	39	Ben	40	Ben	41	Ben
37	Ben	38	Ben	39	Ben	40	Ben	41	Ben	42	Ben
38	Ben	39	Ben	40	Ben	41	Ben	42	Ben	43	Ben
39	Ben	40	Ben	41	Ben	42	Ben	43	Ben	44	Ben
40	Ben	41	Ben	42	Ben	43	Ben	44	Ben	45	Ben
41	Ben	42	Ben	43	Ben	44	Ben	45	Ben	46	Ben
42	Ben	43	Ben	44	Ben	45	Ben	46	Ben	47	Ben
43	Ben	44	Ben	45	Ben	46	Ben	47	Ben	48	Ben
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46	Ben	47	Ben	48	Ben	49	Ben	50	Ben	51	Ben
47	Ben	48	Ben	49	Ben	50	Ben	51	Ben	52	Ben
48	Ben	49	Ben	50	Ben	51	Ben	52	Ben	53	Ben
49	Ben	50	Ben	51	Ben	52	Ben	53	Ben	54	Ben
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55	Ben	56	Ben	57	Ben	58	Ben	59	Ben	60	Ben
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57	Ben	58	Ben	59	Ben	60	Ben	61	Ben	62	Ben
58	Ben	59	Ben	60	Ben	61	Ben	62	Ben	63	Ben
59	Ben	60	Ben	61	Ben	62	Ben	63	Ben	64	Ben
60	Ben	61	Ben	62	Ben	63	Ben	64	Ben	65	Ben
61	Ben	62	Ben	63	Ben	64	Ben	65	Ben	66	Ben
62	Ben	63	Ben	64	Ben	65	Ben	66	Ben	67	Ben
63	Ben	64	Ben	65	Ben	66	Ben	67	Ben	68	Ben
64	Ben	65	Ben	66	Ben	67	Ben	68	Ben	69	Ben
65	Ben	66	Ben	67	Ben	68	Ben	69	Ben	70	Ben
66	Ben	67	Ben	68	Ben	69	Ben	70	Ben	71	Ben
67	Ben	68	Ben	69	Ben	70	Ben	71	Ben	72	Ben
68	Ben	69	Ben	70	Ben	71	Ben	72	Ben	73	Ben
69	Ben	70	Ben	71	Ben	72	Ben	73	Ben	74	Ben
70	Ben	71	Ben	72	Ben	73	Ben	74	Ben	75	Ben
71	Ben	72	Ben	73	Ben	74	Ben	75	Ben	76	Ben
72	Ben	73	Ben	74	Ben	75	Ben	76	Ben	77	Ben
73	Ben	74	Ben	75	Ben	76	Ben	77	Ben	78	Ben
74	Ben	75	Ben	76	Ben	77	Ben	78	Ben	79	Ben
75	Ben	76	Ben	77	Ben	78	Ben	79	Ben	80	Ben
76	Ben	77	Ben	78	Ben	79	Ben	80	Ben	81	Ben
77	Ben	78	Ben	79	Ben	80	Ben	81	Ben	82	Ben
78	Ben	79	Ben	80	Ben	81	Ben	82	Ben	83	Ben
79	Ben	80	Ben	81	Ben	82	Ben	83	Ben	84	Ben
80	Ben	81	Ben	82	Ben	83	Ben	84	Ben	85	Ben
81	Ben	82	Ben	83	Ben	84	Ben	85	Ben	86	Ben
82	Ben	83	Ben	84	Ben	85	Ben	86	Ben	87	Ben
83	Ben	84	Ben	85	Ben	86	Ben	87	Ben	88	Ben
84	Ben	85	Ben	86	Ben	87	Ben	88	Ben	89	Ben
85	Ben	86	Ben	87	Ben	88	Ben	89	Ben	90	Ben
86	Ben	87	Ben	88	Ben	89	Ben	90	Ben	91	Ben
87	Ben	88	Ben	89	Ben	90	Ben	91	Ben	92	Ben
88	Ben	89	Ben	90	Ben	91	Ben	92	Ben	93	Ben
89	Ben	90	Ben	91	Ben	92	Ben	93	Ben	94	Ben
90	Ben	91	Ben	92	Ben	93	Ben	94	Ben	95	Ben
91	Ben	92	Ben	93	Ben	94	Ben	95	Ben	96	Ben
92	Ben	93	Ben	94	Ben	95	Ben	96	Ben	97	Ben
93	Ben	94	Ben	95	Ben	96	Ben	97	Ben	98	Ben
94	Ben	95	Ben	96	Ben	97	Ben	98	Ben	99	Ben
95	Ben	96	Ben	97	Ben	98	Ben	99	Ben	100	Ben

Figure 7: British Museum document called 'The Fate of the Benin bronze plaques.' British Museum Eth Doc 185. © The Trustees of the British Museum, reference file: AOA/Benin/Plaques

is holding in his hands on plate British Museum 17 = p. 1170 no. 5¹⁹ Apparently Schmelz and Von Luschan exchanged knowledge and ideas about the meaning of this artwork.

19 Translation from German: 'Haben Sie darüber ruckgedacht, was der Mann auf die Platte British Museum 17 = S. 1170 no. 5 in den Händen halt?' (Von Luschan, Schmelz & Schmelz 1898: 7933, postcard dated between 8-8-1898 and 8-9-1898).

The long-desired Webster collection

The acquisition of 53 Benin objects (RV-1243-1 to -46 and RV-1295-2 to -7; cat. 1.1, 2.3-4, 3.5-6, 3.8-10, 3.13, 3.15, 5.2-3, 5.6, 7.1, 8.10, 9.1, 10.1, 11.3-5, 11.10-11, 11.25, 11.27, 11.44, 12.1, 13.1, 14.1, 16.1-2, 18.1, 19.2-5, 20.1, 21.3-6, 21.10, 21.13, 24.1, 24.3-4, 24.6-7, 25.3, 28.1-2)²⁰ from William Downing Webster, the British ethnographic art dealer and

20 RV-1243-15 and RV-1243-19 are missing; RV-1295-12 was also included but is missing since 1958. The series dossiers for 1243 and 1295 have been combined in one folder. It holds several lists of objects with prices as well as the original Webster cataloguing numbers.

MEDEDEELINGEN VAN VERSCHILLENDE AARD.

Blijkens bij het Departement van Marine ontvangen bericht is Hr. Ms. pantserdekorkorvet *Sumatra* 24 dezer te IJmuiden binnengekomen.

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Figure 8: the listing of donors in the de Nederlandsche staatscourant, 25 April 1902 (Nederlandsche staatscourant 1902).

collector, known to have assembled a large collection from the Benin military campaign of 1897, is characterised by budgeting issues (Waterfield & King 2006: 55-63).²¹ When Johannes Schmeltz received a first letter from

Webster on 7 December 1899 with a list of Benin objects offered for sale, he realised it would need fundraising on his part to acquire this important collection (NL-LdnRMV-A1-30-542/545). Schmeltz managed to secure funds from, amongst others, Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina, and the Queen Mother, Princess Emma van Waldeck-Pyrmont.

21 See Table 2 for details on specific objects and reconciliation of the museum object numbers with the numbers in Webster's catalogues and Webster's own numbering system.

The Queen Mother's secretary sent a letter to Schmeltz confirming the donation for the purchase of the Benin objects on 8 June 1900 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-31-344/345; CL-L: NI-LdnRMV_A01_277_00109; AR-L 1899-1900: 13; MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_007_0237). All the financial donors were listed in the *Nederlandsche Staatscourant*, the Dutch national state newspaper on 25 April 1902 (Fig. 8).

While on 16 February 1900 Schmeltz writes to Webster that he wants 'the greatest part' of the objects offered to him but that he has not yet found the money to pay for them (NL-LdnRMV-A1-210-531/534), the first purchase of 30 objects was confirmed in the day book on 26 February 1900 and included one object from the Admiralty Islands (DB-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-7-237). In a letter to Schmeltz dated 17 February 1900, Webster includes a newspaper clipping mentioning that he bought the objects at the J.C. Stevens auction. By doing this, he also gives evidence of the current prices of Benin objects (NL-LdnRMV-A1-31-505/506).²²

The second batch of objects²³ was sent to the museum for approval on 16 March 1900. Even before being bought, thirteen objects were registered on 22 March (RV-1243-31 to -43)

(DB-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_007_0238). It appears that between March and November 1900 Schmeltz tries to assemble the funds to buy the items from Webster. In the end he is only able to buy items for the total sum of £54.15.00.²⁴ Webster tells him that it will not be possible to get lower prices for 'Benin specimens' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-32-528). Webster offers him for example favourable terms for several objects stating 'I will make you a reduction of 10% if you take the lot or 5% for part. But must ask you not to mention to other museums that I have made this concession to you' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-32-534/535). A final decision was made in a letter sent to Webster on 30 July 1900 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-210-934/936a).

Schmeltz and Webster remain connected through letters. On 14 October 1900 Schmeltz for example expresses the wish to buy a tusk (Webster catalogue 21, No. 203), but notes that if the price cannot be lowered he will not be able to buy it, which ends up being the case.²⁵ Schmeltz and Webster met in Paris shortly after this letter, possibly at the

22 Correspondence about the first purchase is located at NL-LdnRMV-A1-31-504 to -509.

23 All correspondence can be found at: NL-LdnRMV-A1-32-522/523 to -534/535.

24 54 pounds 15 shillings equals around £5,967 in 2020 (MeasuringWorth 2020).

25 Schmeltz writes: 'I should like to take the portion of the tusk mentioned by you as figured in your Catalogue 21, No. 203 if you can wait for the money. The price asked for it likes [sic] me still very high, but if you can not give it cheaper, I think I can not do better as to take it (NL-LdnRMV-A1-211-62b/64).

World Exhibition. Schmeltz reports on this visit, which he commenced on 18 October 1900 (AR-L 1900-1901: annex). In a letter of 24 October 1900 from Webster to Schmeltz, it becomes clear that the two men made plans to meet for dinner in Paris (NL-Ldn-RMV-A1-32-531/532). During that meeting on 26 October 1900, Schmeltz secured three more Benin objects (RV-1243-44 to -46; *cat.* 10.1, 11.5, 24.6) described as 'Bought in Paris from W.D. Webster, Bicester. 1 ceremony staff and a rooster, both made of bronze and a dagger with amulets(?) in its leather belt, everything comes from Benin.'²⁶

All the objects that had been sent to the Netherlands for viewing and had not been selected were sent back. Also, some of the objects were first registered as loans, allowing Schmeltz to secure the funds to buy them as they were considered important: 'From the objects still on loan some deserve to be mentioned here already as especially noteworthy.'²⁷ Two men, Elco M. Vis and R. Langenbach enabled the procurement of some loan objects: 'Because of the gentlemen Elco M. Vis

in Amsterdam and R. Langenbach in Worms, yours truly was able to once more purchase one of the objects on loan from the Kingdom of Benin.'²⁸

The plates in the annual report show that Schmeltz, used the donations to acquire Webster collections (series RV-1243) and Umlauff collections (series RV-1286, series RV-1310) as the money became available, irrespective of which artworks he had received on view first.

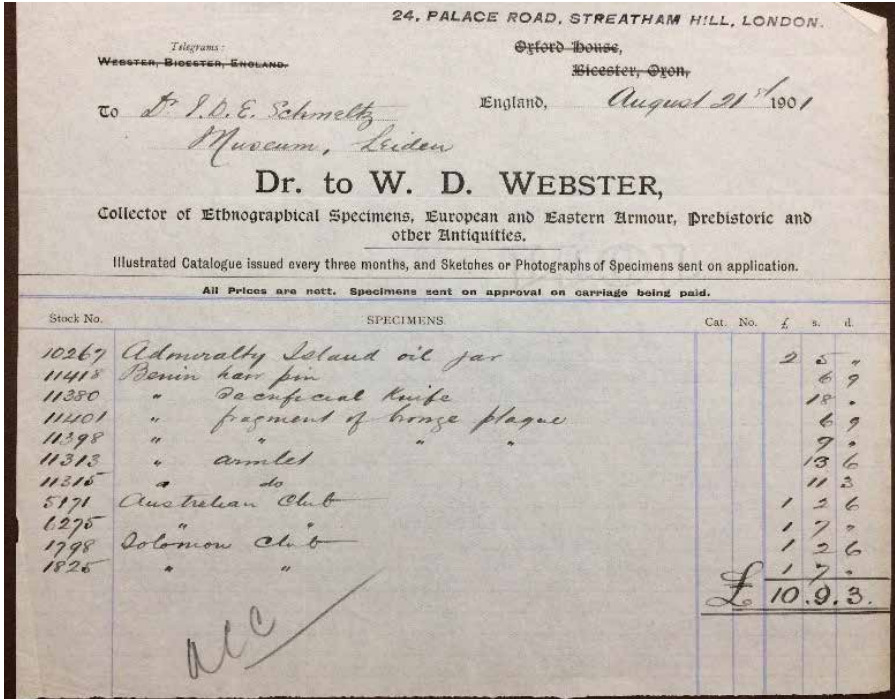
Buying from Webster continues as on 9 May 1901 the day book lists 11 new Webster acquisitions among which 6 Benin items (RV-1295-2 to 7; *cat.* 3.8, 3.10, 12.1, 21.10, 21.13, 25.3) (DB-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-8-6). Interestingly, in the correspondence, the day book, and in Webster's final price list (Fig. 9) the seventh item that was acquired, the bronze model axe (RV-1295-12), which has been noted as missing since 1958, does not appear on the original acquisition list. As it is mentioned in the museum register, it is possible this was a late addition to the purchase (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-47-78).

Early in 1901 Schmeltz receives a number of objects from Webster. However, Schmeltz feels the need to apologise in a letter dating to

26 Translated from Dutch 'Aangekocht te Parijs van W.D. Webster, Bicester. 1 ceremoniestaf en een haan, beide van brons gegoten en een dolk met amuletten(?) in de lederen draagriem alles afkomstig uit Benin' (DB-L: LdnRMV_A03_007_0250).

27 Translated from Dutch: 'Van de nog in bruikleen zijnde voorwerpen verdienen hier reeds als bijzonder merkwaardig vermeld te worden' (AR-L 1900-1901: 15).

28 Translated from Dutch: 'Door de Heeren Elco M. Vis te Amsterdam en R. Langenbach te Worms, werd de ondergeteekende in staat gesteld wederom een, der bij het Museum in bruikleen berustende voorwerpen uit het Koninkrijk Benin in eigendom over te nemen' (AR-L 1901-1902: 17).



31 January 1901 because he has not found the time to seriously consider the shipment (NL-LdnRMV-A1-211-249/253a [251]). A payment letter of £120²⁹ dating 20 February 1901 to W.D. Webster in Bicester confirms the settlement of a delayed payment. However, Schmelz urges: 'send nothing more before our whole account will be settled' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-211-281/294a [286]). Budgetary issues continue to trouble the museum management. In a letter of 21 July 1901 Webster asks for swift payment

Figure 9: The invoice sent by Webster. Series dossier, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.

of 'a number of specimens' sent to the museum because of his impending move to 'a large house in London.' The price calculations for series RV-1295 are listed on the back (NL-LdnRMV-A1-34-376/377). Webster sent a finalised price list on 21 August 1901 (Fig. 9).

29 120 pounds in 1901 equals around £13,120 in 2020 (MeasuringWorth 2020).

Table 2. Reconciliation of the Museum Volkenkunde number and the Webster documentation.

* The Webster numbers are listed in the museum register (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-47-27/28).

**The album mentioned contains photographs of Benin artworks which appeared in Webster's catalogues with annotated prices and buyers. It is held in the British Museum archives and contains information about buyers and prices (British Museum/AOA/Benin/ Webster (Af,A154.1-91)).

Museum Volkenkunde number	Webster Catalogue	Webster number *	Other information
RV-1243-1	Vol. 3, 19, 1898-1899, fig. 95	6442	Album** states: 'Ivory war horn, 18 inches long, sold to Leiden Museum.'
RV-1243-2	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 149	7312	Catalogue states: 'containing a mixture of cowrie shells, &c., evidently a fetish concoction.' Sold for 1.15.0 [ca. £184]
RV-1243-3	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 160	7311	Sold for 10.0 [ca. £1,090]
RV-1243-4		7592	
RV-1243-5	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 89	6892	According to Album: '3.10.0 [ca. £381] sold to Leipzig Museum'
RV-1243-6	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 14	6901	Sold for 4.10.00 [ca. £490]
RV-1243-7		7576	
RV-1243-8	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 188	7275	
RV-1243-9	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 25	6907	Sold for 4.10.00 [ca. £490]
RV-1243-10		9372	
RV-1243-11		7599	
RV-1243-12	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 110	9372	Album states: '50.00 [ca. £5,450] Leiden Museum'
RV-1243-13	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 148	7809	Sold for 15.15.0 0 [ca. £1,717]
RV-1243-14	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 142	7138	
RV-1243-15		6934	<i>Missing from collection</i>
RV-1243-16		9467	Sold for 15.15.0 [ca. £1,717] The original Webster catalogue number could be seen in the original photographs at the Rijksmuseum but it has been removed (Rijksmuseum 2020). The origin of the Rijksmuseum photographs is yet unclear (email correspondence 6 January 2020) One of few objects described by Marquart (1913, II: 10) as having 'relatively old damages' (ie. from before 1872)
RV-1243-17		9468	Sold for 15.15 [ca. £1,717]
RV-1243-18		9488	Sold for 17.17 [ca. £1,946]
RV-1243-19	Vol. 3, 19, 1898-1899, fig. 99	6455	<i>Missing from collection</i> Sold for 4.0.0 [ca. £436]
RV-1243-20	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 82	6885	Sold for 7.10.0 [ca. £818]
RV-1243-21		8785	

Museum Volkenkunde number	Webster Catalogue	Webster number *	Other information
RV-1243-22	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 216	7601	Sold for 5.0 pounds [ca. £545]
RV-1243-23		8787	
RV-1243-24		7339	
RV-1243-25	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 10	6881	Sold for 2.10.0 [ca. £272]
RV-1243-26	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 72	6973	Sold for 15.0 [ca. £1,635]
RV-1243-27		5390	Album states: 'Brass anklet worn by women. 1.15.0. [ca. £190]'
RV-1243-28		7604	
RV-1243-29		7605	
RV-1243-30		9495	
RV-1243-31		9522	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-32	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 17, fig. 86	9385	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-33	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 17, fig. 85	9384	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-34	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 15, fig.77	9361	Sold for 3.10.0 [ca. £382] (Album states: 7.10.0 [ca. £818]) Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-35	Vol. 3, 21, 1898-1899, fig. 195	7323	Catalogue states: 'Brass band in form of a snake, with hammered ornamentation, taken off a wood seat in the King's house' Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-36	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 15, fig. 60	9752	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-37		6721	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-38	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 19, fig. 92	9479	Purchased 22 March 1900 Marquart (1913, II: 45) seems to suggest that this 'manilla' is a product made in Birmingham in imitation of African products. According to the Webster annotated photographs album, there is a male figure, no. 27 in catalogue 21, volume III, that was sold for 7.10.0 [ca. £818] to the Leiden museum. However, this one does not currently appear in the collection.
RV-1243-39	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 15, fig. 72	9503	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-40	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 15, fig. 65	9504	Sold for 1.0.0 [ca. £109] Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-41	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 20, fig. 107	9808	Catalogue states: 'Carved wood box in form of mule's head [...]' Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-42	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. 20, fig. 53	9751	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-43	Vol. 4, 24, 1900, p. fig. 6	9771	Purchased 22 March 1900
RV-1243-44			Bought in Paris from W.D. Webster in November 1900
RV-1243-45			Bought in Paris from W.D. Webster in November 1900
RV-1243-46			Bought in Paris from W.D. Webster in November 1900
RV-1295-2		11418	
RV-1295-3	Vol. 5, 29, 1901, fig. 56	11380	

Museum Volkenkunde number	Webster Catalogue	Webster number *	Other information
RV-1295-4	Vol. 5, 29, 1901, fig. 40	11401	
RV-1295-5	Vol. 5, 29, 1901, fig. 41	11398	
RV-1295-6		11313	
RV-1295-7		11315	
RV-1295-12			<i>Missing from collection.</i> The object is not mentioned on the final purchase list Webster sent to the museum (fig. 9).

Umlauff's collection: another protracted negotiation

The day book entry of 29 April 1901 acknowledges the arrival of 10 Benin objects (RV-1286-1 to -10; *cat.* 3.14, 5.4, 8.9, 13.2, 19.6, 21.9, 22.1, 23.1, 25.1, 27.2) 'Bought from J.F.G. Umlauff in Hamburg. 1 carved elephant's tusk, 1 wooden and copper fitted fetish head, 1 execution sword, two ivory and five bronze objects from Benin'³⁰ (fig. 10). Later that year on 3 July 1901 Umlauff sold 7 objects (RV-1310-1 to -7; *cat.* 8.16, 11.6, 11.12, 11.17, 19.7, 19.9, 24.5) to the museum. And the year after between 17 April and 2 May 1902 another 5 artworks were acquired (RV-1355-1 to -5; *cat.* 6.1, 7.2-3, 24.8, 25.2).

Johann Friedrich Gustav Umlauff (1833-1889) was the proprietor

of a prominent Hamburg-based ethnographic dealership and associated 'museum.' His business started in 1859 and developed into the first 'Naturalienhandlung, Muschelwaaren-Fabrik, verbunden mit einem Zoologisch-Ethnographischen Museum' (Natural history shop, shell shop, connected to a zoological-ethnographic museum), which opened in 1868. The business, focusing on ethnographic collections as well as shell trade, was continued by his children and ran until 1974. Heinrich Umlauff, who was responsible for Umlauff's ethnographic department as from 1894 had 'excellent knowledge about material culture' and 'Collections were preferably not torn apart, but only sold complete, because well-documented pieces increased their value of course.'³¹

30 Translated from Dutch: 'Aangekocht van J.F.G. Umlauff te Hamburg. 1 besneden olifantstand, 1 houten en geelkoperen beslagen fetisjkop, 1 executiezwaard, twee ivoren en vijf bronzen voorwerpen uit Benin' (DB-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-8-5).

31 Translated from German: 'ausgezeichnete Kenntnisse auf dem Gebiet der Materiellen Kultur' and 'Sammlungen wurden zwar vorzugsweise nicht auseinandergerissen, sondern nur geschlossen abgegeben, den gut dokumentierte Stücke erhöhten natürlich ihren Wert' (Thode-Arora 1992: 149-150).



In 1863, J.F.G. Umlauff married the sister of Carl Hagenbeck, another prominent natural history dealer. It significantly influenced his business (Thode-Arora 1992, *The British Museum* 2020c). The historian Glenn Penny (2002) describing the Umlauff family and its relationships with ethnologists in German museums around the turn of the century, states: '[...] he [Hagenbeck] and Umlauff contributed to these museums' earliest acquisitions and remained long-standing sources of collections and displays.' Umlauff influenced the museums not just by supplying collections but also by providing entire displays, even setting up the structures in the museums (Penny 2002: 104). Penny further says: 'Umlauff had no

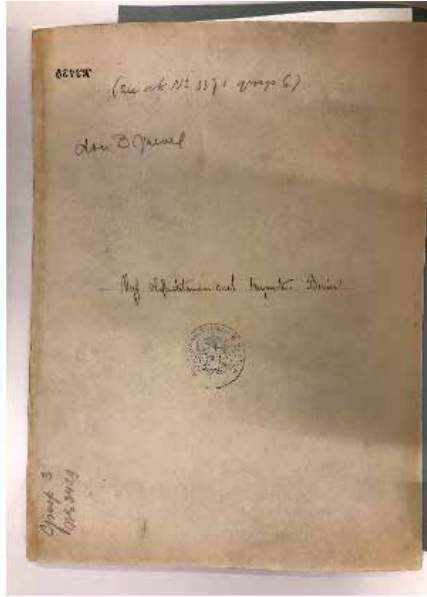


Figure 10: The fourth tusk in the photograph made and donated by B. Grevel in 1901 shows the elephant's tusk acquired from Umlauff (RV-1286-10; *cat.* 27.2). The back of the photograph reads: 'Five elephant's teeth with carving, Benin.' It is unknown who sent the photograph to the Museum Volkenkunde. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, RV-11113, no. 3429.

scientific education, but he was well-versed in the international market of material culture. He drew his authority from possession rather than science. [...] he was certainly an important part of the cultures of collecting, and despite his open quest for profits, ethnologists worked closely with him and his family for decades' (Penny 2002: 105-106).

The first (available) correspondence from J.F.G. Umlauff dates from 15 April 1898 where he encourages Schmeltz to come and visit his Hamburg collections in May. The museum register lists the objects with a short description (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_047_0067). The TMS catalogue card states that the carved ivory arm (RV-1286-9; *cat.* 23.1) was 'Excavated in Benin 1897'.³² A 21 March 1901 letter states that Umlauff offers an elephant tusk (RV-1286-10; *cat.* 27.2) – a 'Beninzahn', Benin tooth – to Schmeltz for 1500 Mark.³³ In earlier letters, it was listed as No. 401 and offered for 1600 Mark (NL-LdnRMV-A1-32-484/485, -486, -487/488 to -491/492). This sale is confirmed in later letters (NL-LdnRMV-A1-32-350/351, -352, -353/354 to -356/357).

As with the acquisition of the Webster collection, Schmeltz again needed to secure funds. He first accepted the objects as a loan before acquiring them officially. The annual report documents the acquired series in detail and includes the names of all the donors for the acquisition (AR-L 1900-1901: 15). The annual report of the following year confirms the earlier statement saying that 'The collections from the Kingdom of Benin were

expanded in the much-desired way, first of all through a gift, for which we owe thanks to an anonymous benefactor, for objects that were up till now on loan to the Museum.'³⁴ The objects range across the three Umlauff series (RV-1286, RV-1310, RV-1355).

On 7 June 1901 Umlauff sent an offer of Benin artworks (RV-1310-1 to -7, fig. 11). The offer was accepted on 19 June and the objects were shipped on 4 July 1901 (CL-L: NL-LdnRMV-A1-277-1/282 [89]). Finally, 'Bought from J.F.G. Umlauff in Hamburg. 7 Benin bronzes'³⁵ became part of the collection. The museum register (fig. 12) lists the objects together with 'old numbers', which are likely to have been Umlauff's own numbering system (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV-A3-048-15).

On 8 March Umlauff writes to Schmeltz that he has received some 'Beninsachen' (Benin things). On 11 April he elaborates on the available collection and gives description and numbers for the pieces on offer. Between 17 April and 2 May 1902, two combs, a mace, a rattle

32 Translated from Dutch: 'Uitgegraven in Benin 1897'.

33 1500 Mark in 1898 equals around €8940 in 2015; 1600 Mark in 1898 equals around €9535 in 2015 (Edvinsson 2016).

34 Translated from Dutch: 'De verzamelingen uit het koninkrijk Benin werden op zeer gewenschte wijze aangevuld, ten eerste door een geschenk, dat aan de mildheid van een niet genoemde zijn willenden begunstiger is te danken, van tot nog toe bij het Museum in bruikleen zijnde voorwerpen' (AR-L 1902-1903: 18).

35 Translated from Dutch: 'Aangekocht van J.F.G. Umlauff te Hamburg. 7 Beninbronzen'.



Figure 11: Umlauff probably sent this photograph with artworks for sale on 7 June 1901 to the museum. All the artworks in the photograph were purchased, as can be seen in figure 12. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, RV-11110, no. 3394.

SERIE 1310

Aankoop J. F. G. Umlauff te Hamburg, Juli 1901.

N ^o .	OMSCHRIJVING.	<i>Ord. N^o.</i>	HERKOMST.	BEMERKINGEN.
1	Masker van brons.	1935	Benin.	
2	Masker van brons.	1936	Benin.	
3	Haar van brons.	1937	Benin.	
4	Masker van brons.	1938	Benin.	
5	Groep van 3 figuren.	1939	Benin.	
6	Ceremoniestaf.	1940	Benin.	
7	Opferschaal of wat.	1944	Benin.	

Figure 12: Excerpt from the museum register listing Umlauff objects with their original numbers. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_048_0015.

staff and a ceremonial sword (RV-1355-1 to -5; *cat.* 6.1, 7.2-3, 24.8, 25.2) are finally purchased for 250 Mark³⁶ (NL-LdnRMV-A1-37-405/406 to -409/410, -411 to -413) as also becomes clear from the day book of

April 1902: 'Bought from J.F.G. Umlauff in Hamburg, five items from Benin. See his invoice of 17 April last.³⁷ The museum register contains a list with short descriptions of the objects (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_051_0005).

36 250 Mark in 1902 equals around €1370 in 2015 (Edvinsson 2016). The 'Umlauff' numbers for the items are: 3057 and 3058 for the combs, 3156 for the mace, 3161 for the ceremonial sword and 3353 for the rattle staff (NL-LdnRMV-A1-37-410).

37 Translation from Dutch: 'Aangekocht van J.F.G. Umlauff te Hamburg, vijf stuks voorwerpen uit Benin. Zie diens rekening van 17 april jl' (DB-L 1902: NL-LdnRMV-A3-8-26).

The intermediary Von Luschan

On 8 August 1898 Felix von Luschan, the assistant director of the African and Oceanic section from 1897 onwards at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, writes to Schmeltz boasting about his Benin collection: 'Our Benin collection has by the way increased more, we now have around 200 pieces, among them many that are far better and more important than the Londoners' (Eisenhofer 1997: 62, Völger 2007).³⁸ In a later letter, dated somewhere between 8 and 16 August 1898 Von Luschan compliments Schmeltz by saying 'Your Benin collection is until now actually one of the richest that exists.'³⁹ A few years later, on 30 November 1901, the Museum Volkenkunde finalised the purchase of four relief plaques (RV-1335-1 to -4; *cat.* 9.4, 21.11, 21.14-15) for which Von Luschan acted as an intermediary. The museum register names the purchase without a list of objects as they are 'not yet described ... Benin.'⁴⁰

As with all Benin purchases in those early years of the twentieth century, the director of the Museum Volkenkunde, Schmeltz, was struggling with securing funds, a problem he addresses in his correspondence between 17 September until 16 November 1901. The latter date confirmed the purchase – 'Bought through intervention of Prof. F. von Luschan in Berlin. 4 bronze objects from Benin.'⁴¹

The four plaques most likely originate from the large collection Von Luschan bought in 1898 from the German trading company Bey & Co. (Von Luschan 1919: 8, Völger 2007: 219). However, Von Luschan complains to Schmeltz in a letter dated 13 November 1898 that the collection he is about to receive from Bey & Co., of which he says 'the price is exorbitant', lacks in diversity when compared to the extant Benin collection (Von Luschan, Schmeltz & Schmeltz 1898).⁴² He concludes that 'From the ones that remain with us I will gladly give

38 Translated from German: 'Unsere Benin-Sammlung hat sich übrigens inzwischen noch weiter vermehrt wir haben jetzt nahe an 200 Stücke darunter viele die weit besser und wichtiger sind als die Londoner.'

39 Translated from German: 'Ihr Sammlung von Benin Altertümer ist zu jetzt einen des reichsten, die überhaupt existiert.'

40 Translated from Dutch: 'nog niet beschreven ... Benin' (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_048_0056).

41 Translated by the authors from Dutch: 'Aangekocht door tussenkomst van Prof. F. von Luschan te Berlijn. 4 stuks bronzen voorwerpen van Benin' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-263/264, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-265/266, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-267, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-268, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-269, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-270/271, NL-LdnRMV-A1-36-272/273, DB-L 1901: NL-LdnRMV-A3-8-19).

42 Translated from German: 'den geforderte Preis exorbitant ist' (BPL 2404_7931).

you the choice of the duplicates.⁴³ In this period, duplicates referred to objects considered generally ‘the same’, though not in today’s terms identical. In this instance the plaques were treated as duplicates even though they are all unique. Duplicates as a concept was used by several museums to deaccession items in their collections (Nichols 2016: 130-131). In a later publication Von Luschan proudly states ‘In addition, from the two large collections received in Lagos, we were able to give over a hundred more pieces that were duplicates or dispensable to us to other museums.’⁴⁴

Interestingly, Schmeltz did not seize the opportunity to buy directly from Bey & Co, when its director Heinrich Bey writes on 7 October 1898 that they had received valuable objects from Benin City, ‘the last things, which were available in Benin, could be purchased and sent by our business partner with special permission from the English

government.’⁴⁵ Correspondence continues and Bey asks whether Schmeltz has any interest in buying the entire collection that they are displaying in Berlin. One letter contains a list of the 317 pieces on offer in Berlin (NL-LdnRMV-A1-27-39). On 21 November, Bey informs Schmeltz that the collection has been sold but that they have received a few other pieces that they are selling, which the museum did not purchase.

Eight years after the acquisition of four plaques by the Museum Volkenkunde, the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam accepts a donation of a fragment of a relief plaque (WM-15983; *cat.* 21.8)⁴⁶ from Felix von Luschan in January 1909 (AR-R 1909: 7, MR-L 1909). While Von Luschan does not discuss this particular piece, he does talk about the purchase of collections from Berlin for Rotterdam in his writing with museum director J.F. Snelleman in December 1908. They also exchange books and other individual objects and, in a letter written on 16 December 1908 Von Luschan ‘throws in’ a small collection from Lindi, Tanzania as a gift. The Benin piece could have been part of a friendly and private gift

43 Translated from German: ‘Welche mit uns verbleiben, würde ich Ihnen gerne die Wuhl unter den Doubletten lassen’; The transcription of Von Luschan’s handwriting may contain errors.

44 Translated from German: ‘Außerdem haben wir aus den beiden großen auf Lagos eingegangenen Sammlungen im ganzen noch über hundert weitere Stücke als Doubletten oder als bei uns entbehrlieh an andere Museen abgeben können’ (Von Luschan 1919: 9).

45 Translated from German: ‘die letzte Sachen, welche in Benin City vorhanden waren, unser Geschäftsfreund hat dieselben mit specieller Erlaubnis der englischen Regierung erwerben & senden dürfen’ (LdnRMV_A01_027_00034).

46 The annual report states 15982, which is most likely a typo because this number does not exist (AR-L 1909: 7).



Figure 13: Fragment of a brass plaque displaying a yellow sheen. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, WM-15983.

exchange between the two directors (Stadsarchief Rotterdam 1908). This hypothesis is strengthened by the absence of other object numbers. This shows it was unlikely to have belonged to the Ethnographic Museum collection in Berlin before it being gifted (fig. 13). This fragment seems to be more

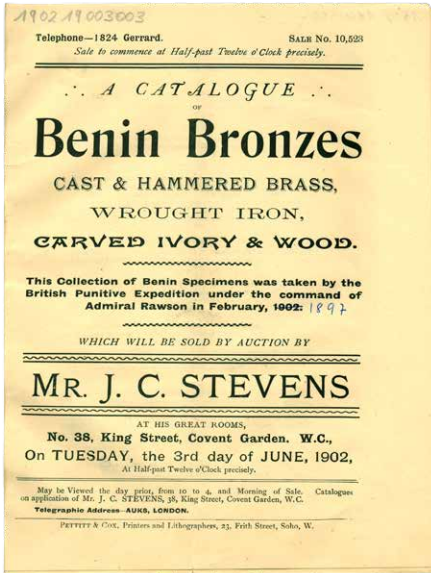
yellow in colour than other bronze/brass objects from the Benin collection, but looks similar to a complete relief plaque in the British Museum collection (The British Museum 2020g).

Theodor Rautenstrauch: the Cologne link

On 19 September 1913 the exchange register lists the acquisition of 191 objects from the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne in exchange for 385 objects from the Museum Volkenkunde (AR-L 1912-1913: 13). The day book states that the objects received, included '1 from Benin', which the exchange register in turn describes as a 'bronze armband, Benin.'⁴⁷ The museum register gives both the current number, RV-1863-28 (*cat.* 2.5) and the old number 380 that refers to the numbering of the 'Doublettenskatlog', or the duplicates catalogue (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_057_0021). The original Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum number was 5245. It appears that Theodor Rautenstrauch (1873-1907) bought this and other objects at the 'Benin Bronzes' auction organised by the auctioneer John Crace Stevens (1809-1859) on 3 June 1902 in

47 Translated from Dutch: '1 van Benin' ... 'bronzen armband, Benin' (DB-L: NL-Ldn_RMV_A03_009_0047).

Figure 14: Cover and page from Steven's catalogue provided by the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum.



1902 11003 009

7

BRONZE SPECIMENS—continued.

LOT	Stock No.	Description	Dimensions	Catalogue No.	No. in Case
88	9821	Same as lot 84	4 inches broad		
89	7391	ditto	5½		
90	6985	ditto	4½	21	79
91	12139	ditto	4½		
92	12138	ditto	4½		
93	11278	ditto, with four figures	5½	29	10
94	11279	ditto	5½	29	10
95	11299	Bronze bell with incised and raised ornament	7½ inches high 4½ square	29	21
96	11290	ditto	5½	41	29 19
97	11292	ditto	6½	31	29 20
98	11289	ditto	6½	31	29 21
99	11296	ditto	6½	31	29 22
100	11293	ditto	5½	32	29 181
101	6865	ditto	4½	2	21 94
102	6874	ditto	5	2½	21 95
103	6877	ditto	4½	2½	21 97
104	6871	ditto	3½	2	21 98
105	6487	ditto	6½	33	
106	11300	ditto	6½	32	
107	11291	ditto	7½	34	
108	6383	ditto	2½	23	21 101
109	6867	ditto	5½	22	21 102
110	6870	ditto	4½	21	21 103
111	6440	ditto	4½	22	21 100
112	6355	ditto	4	21	21 111
113	6875	ditto	3	21	21 112
114	6384	ditto	3½	24 diam.	21 134
115	7826	ditto	4	3 square	21 144
116	7329	ditto	4½	21	21 152
117	9778	ditto	6½	34	24 10

Handwritten notes on the right side of the page: '24 11', '22.5', '22.5'.

London.⁴⁸ Rautenstrauch was the son of Adele and Eugen Rautenstrauch and a member of the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (German Colonial Society), Department of Cologne. His parents were collectors, as was his maternal uncle Wilhelm Joest, whose combined collections formed the basis for the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum. After both parents died, Theodor and his siblings continued to build the museum initiated by their parents (Wikipedia-Autoren 2020a,

Fraunhofer-Institutszentrum Schloss Birlinghoven 2020).

According to the auction catalogue, the 1902 Stevens's sale auctioned off Benin objects that had all been looted during the British Punitive Expedition of 1897. The collection is described as 'taken by the British punitive expedition under the command of Admiral Rawson in February, 1897' (The Times 1902). Rautenstrauch most probably bought several items, including numbers 93 and 94, the latter corresponding to RV-1863-28 (fig. 14).

Willy Fröhlich's book discussing the Benin collection at the Rautenstrauch-

48 Personal communication with Clara Himmelheber from the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, late 2019 and June 2020.

Joest Museum mentions a virtually identical piece that is still in the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum: 'This piece used to be owned by Webster, London and was acquired for the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum on 3 June 1902 at an auction of J.C. Stevens in London. A nearly identical piece can be found in the Webster catalogue 29, image 10, but its location is unknown.⁴⁹ There is a possibility that the piece with the unknown location refers to RV-1863-28 and is linked to the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, which appeared in Webster's catalogue. Matching images appear in both Fröhlich (1966) and Webster's catalogue 29, figure 12 (1901: 35, see Table 2).

Embarking on an object exchange was a first for the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum as testified in the correspondence between the director Willy Foy (1873-1929) and Hendrik H. Juynboll (1867-1945), the director of the Museum Volkenkunde (NL-LdnRMV-A1-85-90/91 to -100/101, -102, -103/104). Juynboll started working at the Museum Volkenkunde as curator for Indonesia (then the Dutch-Indies)

in 1899 and served as director from 1909 to 1932. He engaged in a number of museum exchanges, boasting to Foy in a letter dated 17 April 1913 that now Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin also wanted to engage in exchanges (ER-L: NL-LdnRMV-A01_224_00133).

Oba Esigie and the Tillman family

At the Tropenmuseum, in 1947, a long-term loan by W. Georg Tilmann – the family dropped the last n in the name when they moved to the United States – which included a bronze relief plaque (TM-1772-2018; *cat.* 21.7), was recorded as a donation by Wolf Tillman, the son of Georg Tillmann, based in Horsham, USA at the time (AR-A 1947). Georg Tillmann (1882-1941) was a German banker and banker's son of Jewish descent who moved to Amsterdam in 1931. He started collecting mainly Indonesian art and became a well-known collector. The family moved to England in 1939 and to the USA in 1941 where Georg passed away soon after (Wijs 2018, JoodsAmsterdam 2019). The following observation was made by the former Tropenmuseum intern Aga Visbeen about Georg Tillmann's collecting practices: 'From what is known, Tillmann very carefully brought together collection information about all his objects and every object had a card with a description. From the

49 Translated from German: 'Dieses Stück befand sich früher im Besitz von Webster, London (Webster Kat. 29/1901, abb. 12) und wurde auch am 3. Juni 1902 auf der Auktion von J.C. Stevens in London für das Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum erworben. Ein fast bis auf alle Einzelheiten gleiches Stück ist im Webster Kat. 29, abb. 10 abgebildet, dessen Verbleib nicht nachgewiesen ist' (Fröhlich 1966: 288).

literature I [Visbeen] knew that part of these cards had been lost, but I hoped to find something in the Tropenmuseum archive. I did not succeed. The head archivist [at the KIT], Ms. Yvonne Teffer, suspects that the cards were destroyed in a fire at the KIT in 1960.⁵⁰

According to the Tropenmuseum's institutional memory (Wijs 2018) the loan from Georg Tillmann was converted into a donation as late as 1994. However, museum documentation from 1947 describes the Tillman collection as a gift.⁵¹ It is possible the donation was never registered and remained a loan until it was again officially gifted by Wolf Tillman in 1994. The exact origin of the Benin plaque is not clear. Tillmann acquired objects from multiple dealers, including the French ethnographic

art dealer Charles Ratton (1896-1985) (Drieënhuizen n.d.: 142). Museum documentation takes the Ratton route seriously stating that 'It is possible that Tillmann acquired this plate from Charles Ratton, who probably acquired it in an exchange with the Museum für Völkerkunde in Frankfurt am Main. On the other plate – [TM-]1772-2017 which was returned to the family – the number N.S. 1156 was found. This number refers to the aforementioned museum. See Catalogue Sotheby's 23 June 2006: Art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. no. 122.⁵² However, Catherine Elliott (2008: 134-139) who examined the provenance of the returned relief plaque (TM-1772-2017) could find no evidence that the plaque currently in the Tropenmuseum (TM-1772-2018) also came from Ratton. Her findings are further supported by the fact that no other inventory numbers than *G T 45*, which stands for Georg Tillmann, have been found on the plaque (TM-1772-2018).

The Nigerian antiquities specialist Barbara Blackmun suggests that the figure depicted on the relief plaque

50 Translated from Dutch: 'Van wat bekend is, heeft Tillmann heel zorgvuldig over alle objecten van zijn collectie informatie verzameld en bij elk object hoorde een kaartje met een omschrijving. Uit de literatuur wist ik dat een deel van deze kaartjes verloren was gegaan, maar ik hoopte misschien iets te vinden in het archief van het Tropenmuseum. Het is me niet gelukt. De hoofdarchivaris, mevrouw Yvonne Teffer, vermoedt dat deze kaartjes in vlammen op zijn gegaan tijdens een brand in het KIT in 1960' (Visbeen 2005).

51 Documentation can be found at: NL-HaNA, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2.20.69, inv.nr. 2214, folders 147, 148 and 150. The museum register for series 1772 is not digitised but lists the collection Tillmann as a donation rather than a loan (AQR-A 1935-1948).

52 Translated from Dutch: 'Het is niet uitgesloten dat Tillmann deze plaat verwierf van Charles Ratton, die het op zijn beurt waarschijnlijk door ruil weer verwierf van het Museum f. Völkerkunde te Frankfurt am Main. Op de andere plaat – 1772-2017 die werd geretourneerd aan de familie – werd het nummer N.S. 1156 aangetroffen. Dit nummer verwijst naar voornoemd museum' (TMS: TM-1772-2018).

(TM-1772-2018) is Oba Esigie who ruled the Benin Kingdom in the early 16th century. For this reason, Blackmun estimates this plaque to have been made between the 1540s and 1700 (Faber, Dartel, Wijs 2011: 133).

The Hamburg connection

A bell (WM-15984; *cat.* 5.5), a relief plaque (WM-15985; *cat.* 21.12) and a plaque fragment (WM-15986; *cat.* 21.16) were purchased in 1909 from the 'Museum Hamburg.' The museum in Hamburg could refer to the Museum für Völkerkunde, the current MARKK (Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt) in Hamburg or to the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (MKG) also in Hamburg. It is known that both Hamburg museums were early acquirers of Benin material from German trading companies in Lagos. The MARKK has not yet found traces of these objects (MARKK, personal communication December 2019). However, the MKG holds Lagerbücher (stock ledgers), which contain documentation on the sales of the Benin collections that director Justus Brinckmann made. The Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam is not mentioned but as the archive is not digitised, future detailed research conducted on-site may reveal more (MKG personal communication 2020).

The Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam stated at the time that 'With this

purchase the museum now possesses a few good pieces from the period (16th and 17th century) when on the West Coast of Africa (Gulf of Guinea) a highly developed ivory carving art and bronze casting (à cire perdue) existed.'⁵³

Matthias Knoops: a Tropenmuseum donor

On 2 November 1926 Matthias Knoops donated objects to the Tropenmuseum. Knoops (Arnhem, 16 October 1868 – 10 February 1942) was a tobacco trader who lived in Oud Nieuwer-Amstel with his wife J.M.H. Terhoeven. He was a member of the tobacco trading firm J.H.A. Gebing in Amsterdam, which merged with the firm Lieftinck & Zoon in late 1933 (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief 1893-1939, Algemeen Handelsblad 1933). They traded tobacco from Java.⁵⁴ Knoops went bankrupt and received 'surseance van betaling' (suspension of payment) in 1936 (Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant 1936; Nederlandsche staatscourant 1936). On 7 December 1938 the art

53 Translated from Dutch: 'Door deze aankoop bezit het Museum thans een paar goede stukken uit den tijd (16^e en 17^e eeuw) toen op de Westkust van Afrika (Golf van Guinea) een hoog ontwikkelde ivoorsnijkunst en bronsgieterij (à cire perdue) bestond' (AR-R 1909).

54 Multiple sources yield some information on Knoops and the firm where he worked (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief 1870-1878, 020 Apps 2020).

2580 Kop van hond uit Benin.	ret. 2582 14/Oct '26	Bruickes.
2581 Hoofd (hond) Benin. L. Afrika.	ret. 14/Oct '26	Bruickes.
2582 Hoofd (hond) Benin. L. Afrika.	ret. 14/Oct '26	Bruickes.
2583 Ab. 1580.	ret. 14/Oct '26	Bruickes.
2584 Ab. 1580.	ret. 14/Oct '26	Bruickes.

collection of both European and Asian art of Knoop was sold at an auction of Mensing & Zoon (De Telegraaf 1938).

Correspondence with Knoop shows that he offered to donate his collection of 14 Benin objects on 20 October 1926, enquiring whether the museum also collected objects from outside the Dutch colonies. He wrote: 'I am in possession of several bronze objects from Benin (Africa), among which a few very rare items.'⁵⁵ He also offered a copy of Von Luschan's book 'Altertümer von Benin' as part of the donation (NL-Ha-NA 1913-1947). The objects were received by the museum on 2 November 1926. In the original museum register of the Koloniaal Instituut (Inventaris der Verzamelingen V) the collection is described extensively with virtually the same text as on the Tropenmuseum inventory cards (MR-A: NL-HaNA. 1926-1927; AR-A 1926: NL-HaNA-KIT-21).

In July 1920, just before the collection is donated to the

Figure 15: The museum register of the Museum van Kunstnijverheid in Haarlem shows the artworks Knoop loaned to the museum and the date of their return (NL-HIm_NHA_3231_67).

Tropenmuseum, five of Knoop's Benin objects were exhibited at the Museum van Kunstnijverheid (Museum of Crafts) in Haarlem (Huygen 2018, Algemeen Handelsblad 1920). While the start date of the loan is uncertain, the loan was returned to Knoop on 12 October 1926 (Noord-Hollands Archief 1901-1934). This suggests that some of the objects donated in 1926 must have been in Knoop's possession since at least 1920. A handwritten note on a letter from Knoop suggests the objects were numbered 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581 and 2582 (NLHIm_NHA_3231_75). These numbers correspond with the description in the museum register of the Museum van Kunstnijverheid (fig. 15), which shows that Knoop only loaned the bronze head, cockerel and three bronze figures to the museum (NL-HIm_NHA_3231_67). Based on some of the dated objects in the inventory book the loan must

55 Translated from Dutch: 'Ik ben in het bezit van verschillende bronzen voorwerpen uit Benin (Afrika), waaronder enkele hoog zeldzame exemplaren' (NL-HaNA 1913-1947).

Table 3: Analysis of individual Knoop objects.

Museum Volkenkunde object number	Tropenmuseum object number	Other information
RV-2668-432 Male figure with gun and leopard	TM-332-5	Described as 'odd' (RV inventory card 1987)
RV-2668-433 Two birds with one body	TM-332-3	Described as a 'modern' Benin piece as it is stylistically different from older pieces (RV inventory card 1987)
RV-2668-434 Two birds with one body	TM-332-4	Described as a 'modern' Benin piece as it is stylistically different from older pieces (RV inventory card 1987)
RV2668-435 Male figure with sword	TM-332-7	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987) Described as 'Recent imitation and badly made' (Namaak uit den laatsten tijd en slecht gevormd) (TM inventory card, 1926)
RV-2668-436 Box with lid with figures	TM-332-6	Described as 'period of decline or even newer' (vervalperiode of zelfs nog jonger) (RV inventory card 1987)
RV-2668-437 Male figure with bell	TM-332-8	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987)
RV-2668-438 Male figure with bird and stick	TM-332-9	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987), it is thought to be made after 1897 based on stylistic analysis referring to Fagg-List: Nigerian Images p.8-9. Described as 'imitation from recent times' (Namaak uit den laatsten tijd.) (TM inventory card 1926). (see RV-2668-435)
RV-2668-439 Male figure with bird and stick	TM-332-10	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987)
RV-2668-440 Male figure wearing a mitre-like headdress	TM-332-11	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987) Described as 'imitation from recent times' (Namaak uit den laatsten tijd.) (TM inventory card 1926) (see also RV-2668-435) Went missing between 1947 and 1994
No RV number because it was never transferred	TM-332-12, already missing in 1947	
RV-2668-441 Figure with crown-like headdress	TM-332-13	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987) Old TM documentation states it is a 'badly executed imitation from recent times' (zeer slecht gelukte namaak uit recen ten tijd).
RV-2668-442 Two male figures with guns resting on the ground	TM-332-14	Described as 'modern' (RV inventory card 1987) The entry under the TM inventory number states: 'This bronze figure stood on a shrine to the ancestors' (Dit bronzen beeld van twee figuren heeft op een voorouderaltaar gestaan.); while the TM documentation card describes it as 'modern'
RV-2668-443 Two male figures with guns resting over the shoulder	TM-332-15	The entry under the TM inventory number states: 'This bronze figure stood on a shrine to the ancestors' (Dit bronzen beeld van twee figuren heeft op een voorouderaltaar gestaan)
RV-2668-444 Rooster	TM-332-2	End of period 1648-1691 according to inventory card
RV-2668-445 Head of an Oba	TM-332-1	Probably period 1610-1642 according to inventory card

have been given between 1912 and 1920 (NL-Hlm_NHA_3231_67). In the reports of the years 1913 and 1914 the five objects are not mentioned as loans (NL-Hlm_NHA_3231_47), nor in the registers up to 1917 (NL-Hlm_NHA_3231_71) nor in the annual report of 1919-1920 (NL-Hlm_NHA_3231_17). This narrows down the arrival date of the loan between 1918 and 1919. Only annual reports from 1919 onwards and registers up to 1917 are available so the date cannot be narrowed down any further.

In November 1947, the Museum Volkenkunde bought and exchanged almost the entire African collection from the Tropenmuseum among which were 14 Knoops objects from Benin (RV-2668-432 to -445; *cat.* 8.5, 9.2, 11.2, 11.7-8, 11.13, 11.18-19, 11.28-32). This was the time when the Tropenmuseum discovered that one of the original Knoops objects (TM-332-12) that was initially described as 'namaak' (imitation) had gone missing. Missing since then, the object was officially deaccessioned in 2004. The entire acquisition, series RV-2668 comprising 3147 objects, was listed as 'West Afr.

Nigeria' (MR-L: LdnRMV_A03_065_0027). The series dossier does not reveal any information on individual objects. A link to 1897 cannot be proven, but the visual characteristics of especially RV-2668-444 and RV-2668-445 make it likely.

The documentation cards from the Museum Volkenkunde, written in April 1987, and in some cases also documentation from the Tropenmuseum written before 1947, seem to indicate that some of the Knoops objects may be of more recent (post-1897) manufacture. Apart from the commemorative head of an Oba (RV-2668-445; *cat.* 8.5), the rooster (RV-2668-444; *cat.* 11.2) and the man with a gun pointing at a leopard (RV-2668-432; *cat.* 11.13), all other artworks have been described as 'modern' or 'imitation.' The Dutch epithets in Table 3 give an indication of the ideas that curators at the time held about what constituted historical Edo material culture. However, more detailed art historical analysis is needed to establish whether the perceived 'modern imitations' were indeed produced after 1897.

Likely link to the 1897 British military campaign

Rosalie Hans
with Annette Schmidt

Nine objects have a possible link to the looting of Benin City in 1897. Contrary to the objects with a proven link to 1897, these pieces entered the museum collections in the early to late twentieth and the twenty first century, including 1916, 1926 and much later in the 1940s, 1953 and two in 1998 and 2007. These latter two were donated by well-known African art collectors, Piet and Ida Sanders. For artworks acquired in the early to mid-twentieth century the limitations of available provenance information and the stylistic features of the artworks suggest that a connection to 1897 is possible, but at this time it cannot be definitively determined through documentary research. For the pieces that came into the collections in later decades, it is mainly the stylistic characteristics of the artworks that make a link possible, as well as the well-known art dealers involved in the selling of these items.

The antiquary Edgar Beer

On 29 December 1948 the Museum Volkenkunde acquired three pieces from Edgar Beer in Brussels of which one was a brass relief with a bovine head (RV-2771-3; *cat.* 21.17). He delivered the objects himself (CL-L 1948). Many years later, on 28 April 1973, the museum purchased a rattle staff (RV-4649-1; *cat.* 24.9) from Beer.

Edgar Beer (Kersou, 26 October 1909 – Sainte-Ode, 8 August 1984) was a well-known dealer who sold and proposed many objects for sale to the ethnographic museums in the Netherlands. Born in Russia, he became a naturalised Belgian on 29 July 1938 and was first registered as an antiquary and later as a librarian. Married to H  l  ne Horowicz (1914-1975) on 27 June 1942, the couple had two children. On 1 October 1952 he is listed as a member of 'La Soci  t   des Oc  anistes' and as an antiquary with the address 22 Avenue Albert in Brussels (Actes de la Soci  t   1952). He changed addresses several times with addresses including Avenue Arnold Delvaux 23 on 5 June 1954, Floreallaan 180, and Coghenlaan 160 in Uccle, Brussels. In 1980, after his wife's death, he moved to Avenue Louis Lepoutre, in Ixelles, Brussels.

Edgar Beer had frequent contacts with both the Wereldmuseum and the Museum Volkenkunde selling objects from across the world for several

decades until at least 1979.⁵⁶ In the Africa collection of the NMVW, he appears 93 times as the vendor. He habitually sold objects as individual pieces or as small groups, which, in some letters, he recounts as having obtained 'from the countryside.'

This might refer to the practice of acquiring objects from private collections in regional locations, which was a preferred method for certain dealers. His wife H  l  ne Horowicz was a partner in the art business as she also frequently travelled to museums to offer them pieces as was a more widespread practice at the time.

A letter from Beer to director of Museum Volkenkunde G.W. Locher (1908-1997) states 'I need to go back to the province this week to buy African and Precolumbian pieces from a private collection.'⁵⁷ The back of the letter lists the three objects (series RV-2771) in Dutch, no. 3 being:

56 The archives of the ethnographic department of the Africa Museum Tervuren contain two acquisition dossiers on Edgar Beer: DA.2.11.1175 and DA.3.43. They contain mostly information about payment. The directors' archive contains a number of dossiers in Beer's name but these have as yet not been examined as they are not digitised.

57 Translated from French: 'cette semaine je dois me rendre en province pour acqu  rir des pi  ces africaines et pr  colombiennes dans une collection particuli  re' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-134-39/42); G.W. Locher (1908-1997) was curator at the Museum Volkenkunde from 1937 to 1946 (while also on fieldwork in Timor) and director from 1946 to 1955 (K  bben 1999).

'brass animal head, Benin.'⁵⁸ The artwork is the only one of the three objects purchased that is described briefly in the museum register (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_066_0049).

Very few plaques like this seem to exist, and in most the bovine head is still attached to the plaque. There is only one example of a similar object on a photograph, no. Af,A60.75, in the collection of the British Museum (The British Museum 2020f), and one other, no. III C 8252 in the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2020c). In Webster's catalogues there are similar objects in catalogue 21, no. 87 and catalogue 29 nrs. 85 and 119. It is currently unclear whether the heads without plaques were ever part of a plaque or whether they were more similar to masks.

According to correspondence and the acquisition record, an ivory tusk ('ivoren tand') from Benin (RV-2824-1) was bought on 27 September 1949 by Edgar Beer in Leiden for fl. 350⁵⁹ as mentioned in an expenses overview dated to 6 October 1949 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-136-368). However, the tusk (RV-2824-1) was later identified as a Yoruba object.

Both the inventory card and the annual report describe the 1973 acquisition as follows: 'The seller has

provided the following information: "Ceremonial staff of Peter Osunde, Uko of Benin."⁶⁰ *Uko* most probably refers to a position held, before one achieves an individual title. People in this position do not live in the palace of the Oba, but do perform important services for the Oba, including presenting a village chief to his subjects. They are also the official royal messengers (Bradbury 1964: 38). However, as early as 1973, the rattle staff (RV-4649-1) was viewed as unlikely to have been as formerly described. The curator remarked on the inventory card: 'On 4649-1 the eroded underside seems suspicious to me because generally these sticks are not stuck in the ground.'⁶¹

Galerie Lemaire

The Museum Volkenkunde purchased an arm ring (RV-2799-2; *cat.* 3.7) on 8 April 1949, another arm ring (RV-2837-1; *cat.* 3.11) in December 1949 and a brass figure (RV-2975-1; *cat.* 11.26) on 14 January in 1952 from Matthias Ludovicus (Louis) Joannes Lemaire (1891 – 1979) who founded

58 Translated from Dutch: 'messingen dierenkop, Benin'.

59 350 Dutch guilders in 1949 equal around €1560 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

60 Translated from Dutch: 'De verkoper heeft als gegevens verstrekt: "Waardigheidsstaf van Peter Osunde, Uko van Benin"' (AR-L 1973: 10, MR-L).

61 Translated from Dutch: 'Aan 4649-1 komt de aangevreten onderkant mij nogal verdacht voor omdat deze stokken over het algemeen niet in de grond gestoken worden' (TMS RV-4649-1: inventory card by Giljam Dusée, 28-4-1973).

his galerie Lemaire in 1933 (MR-L: NL-LdnRMV-A03_066_0070). The move to running a gallery started in the 1920s when Lemaire gave up a teaching career to become manager of a business selling Oriental carpets in Rotterdam. His business connections frequently brought him into contact with 'ethnographic' artefacts from around the world. In 1933 he opened a small shop in Amsterdam called *Magazijn Marokko* where he dealt in Oriental carpets and 'tribal' art. The cultures of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Oceania more generally were well represented (Corbey 2000: 43-5). When Louis Lemaire passed away his gallery was taken over by son Frits and daughter Trees Lemaire. In 2004, the Metropolitan Museum of Art acquired the photographic archives of the business because of its documentary importance to the research of the history of international tribal art trade.⁶² Today Galerie Lemaire specializes in the arts of Africa, Asia and Oceania (Hovens n.d., de Boer 2015, Claessens 2016, Veldkamp 2005, Larson 2016).

A letter from 23 March 1949 lists the arm ring (RV-2799-2) as one of the acquisitions given 'for viewing', but does not provide any other information apart from a price of fl.

250⁶³ (NL-LdnRMV-A1-135-317/318). Von Luschan (1919: 407-408) discusses similar arm rings with two human heads and catfish coming out of the nose and writes that he knows of three examples like these (1919). One other example can be found in the collection of the Pitt-Rivers museum, object no. 1900.39.14 (Pitt-Rivers Museum 2012a).

The other arm rings (RV-2837-1) acquired through Lemaire is listed in the museum register as having been purchased in December 1949 (MR-L: LdnRMV_A03_067_0004). No correspondence relates to this object directly, but there is a purchase statement of January 1950 which indicates that some things were bought from Lemaire for fl. 280.⁶⁴ Since this is one of the two objects that was purchased from Lemaire between December and April, it is likely that this arm ring was paid for in January 1950 (NL-LdnRMV-A1-138-421). The Ethnologisches Museum Berlin has several similar arm rings in its collection (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2020a, b).

The series dossier with a report written on 14 January 1952 indicates that the brass figure (RV-2975-1, fig. 16) was first offered by Lemaire to the museum in December 1951.

62 As the photographic archives of the Galerie Lemaire have not been digitised, research can only be carried out in situ at the Metropolitan Museum.

63 250 Dutch guilders in 1949 equals about €1115 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

64 280 Dutch guilders in 1949 equals about €2750 in 2018 (IISG 2020).



Figure 16: Brass figure with mud-fish legs.
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen,
RV-2975-1.

The characteristics of the artwork, particularly the mud-fish legs refer to the Benin royal court art and Oba Ohen (reign date: early fifteenth century), who is said to have had deformed legs, which he hid from public view. When this was revealed he was killed for this deception and the symbolism of the mudfish refers to the limits of the authority of the ruler (Ezra 1992: 131). Another explanation given with regard to the use of mudfish for legs in depicting an Oba is his 'symbolic identification with Olokun, god of the great waters and source of all earthly wealth' (Girshick Ben-Amos 1995: 30). This strong symbolic link as well as its age renders the link to the military campaign of 1897 likely. While there is an in-depth note on the object written by Adriaan A. Gerbrands (1917-1997), a former curator of the Museum Volkenkunde and chair of cultural anthropology at the University Leiden, the provenance of the object has not become clearer.

A donation from the Royal Scottish Museum

The Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh donated an elephant's tusk (TM-2289-3; *cat.* 27.3) to the Tropenmuseum on 16 November 1953. This gift was listed in the acquisition register of 18 November 1953 together with two others: TM-2289-1 and TM-2289-2 (AQR-A 1948-1954; TM-

1832-*to TM-2386-*). The description intriguingly states: 'Via Dr Jager Gerlings during visit to England. Personally transported luggage, airplane.'⁶⁵ The British connection together with the number 26033 at the bottom makes a connection to the Wellcome collection the most likely explanation, as existing registers in Edinburgh do not provide any further clarification. Batches of this large and diverse collection came into the Royal Scottish Museum in different years including 1949 and 1953, not all of which were accessioned into the permanent collection. Several Wellcome collections⁶⁶ objects in the British Museum have similarly high numbers (see for example The British Museum 2020a, b). At the time of acquisition, the tusk was already damaged and the Dutch inventory card states: 'The tusk is discoloured on one side probably during the fire in 1897.'⁶⁷

65 Translated from Dutch: 'Via Dr Jager Gerlings tijdens bezoek Engeland. Persoonlijk medegebracht bagage, vliegtuig' (AQR-A: NLHaNA-KIT-7881).

66 The Wellcome collections are the subject of ongoing research.

67 Translated from Dutch: 'De slagtang is aan één zijde waarschijnlijk tijdens de brand van 1897 door vuur verkleurd' (TM-2289-3: inventory card).



Figure 17: Newspaper advertising for Carel Blazer's parrot sale. Haagsche Courant 1907.

The tobacco trader Carel Blazer

The Wereldmuseum purchased two Benin objects – a carved coconut casing⁶⁸ (WM-23485; *cat.* 9.3) and a manilla (WM-23486a-d; *cat.* 14.7; see chapter 'unlikely link to the 1897 military campaign') from Carel Blazer in 1916 (19 December 1873 – 24 September 1934) (AR-R 1916: 23).⁶⁹ Blazer, who lived in the Aert van Nesstraat 28, Rotterdam, sold from 1904 onwards a number of objects to the Wereldmuseum (MR-R, AQR-R notebook Metaalhof). He was a tobacco trader, was married to Elizabeth de Vries and had eight children

(Stadsarchief Rotterdam 1880-1940a). In 1907, Blazer is recorded as trying to sell parrots of different origins at the above mentioned address with advertisements in different newspapers (fig. 17) (Haagsche courant 1907). In 1909, he does the same but for parrots at a lower price, suggesting his trading of exotic birds was an occasional side-business next to his work as a tobacco trader.

The Afrika Museum acquisitions

In 1970, the Afrika Museum purchased a commemorative bronze head (AM-254-1; *cat.* 8.7) from Willem E. Geyskens (1923-1989), living in Diest, Belgium. This acquisition became part of the Loan Collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Thermoluminescence techniques of the University of

68 Kate Ezra has researched coconut casings in her book *Royal Art of Benin* (1992).

69 The Rotterdam Stadsarchief holds a folder but nothing has been found about Blazer in 1916 (Stadsarchief Rotterdam 1916).

Oxford in 1977, have dated this object between 1380 and 1530. The inventory card states: 'Buried in the ground by the father of the seller, because it was forbidden for citizens to possess bronzes. Originating from Apity. The previous owner still has another 5 bronzes + 1 ivory tusk.'⁷⁰ It is assumed that his information came from Willem Geyskens who bought artefacts while trading in wood in Nigeria. No place called 'Apity' has been found in Edo State but there is an area called Apitipiti in Oyo, north of Ibadan. There is also a possibility that Apity refers to a person. British Museum curator and anthropologist William Fagg (1914-1992) who was an expert on the history of Benin art, interpreted the artworks in 1977 as follows: 'Likely to be a gift from the Oba of Benin to a king of a tributary state in the south-east: Mahin.'⁷¹

In 1982-1983 Wim Spruit (1927, Groningen – 2016, Sterksel), who started collecting African objects together with his wife Willy Spruit, purchased a brass head from Solo

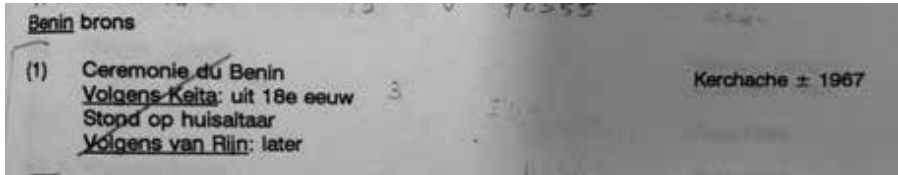
Kante, a dealer in African art (Norden 2018, TMS scan: letter accompanying 16-11-1999 donation). The Spruits donated the brass commemorative head (AM-595-1; *cat.* 8.8) on 16 November 1999 to the Afrika Museum. The donation was accompanied by the assertion from an appraiser that it had been in the donor's collection in 1986. This is accompanied by a valuation report by the same appraiser. While this documentation was supplied by Wim Spruit to comply with the UNIDROIT convention at the request of the Afrika Museum, it is uncertain where Solo Kante was based, nor does the acquisition date prove that the object has been in Europe for the last 50 years. Afrika Museum correspondence with Spruit explains that the UNIDROIT convention takes care of stolen or illegally traded cultural property and asks for information about the head's date of entry into Europe. It is unclear whether the letters are referring to the 1995 or the 1970 convention on 'Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.' The convention stipulates that a restitution claim can be made on a stolen object within fifty years of the theft or export with a number of exceptions (UNIDROIT 2014).

The brass head is currently dated between the late 16th and early 17th century. Scientific dating methods could, however, provide more detailed evidence of its manufacture date.

70 Translated from Dutch: 'Begraven in de grond door de vader van de verkoper, omdat het voor burgers verboden was bronzes te bezitten. Afkomstig uit Apity. De vorige bezitter heeft nog 5 bronzes + 1 ivoren tand' (AR-BD 1909: 23).

71 Translated from Dutch: 'Waarschijnlijk een geschenk van de Oba van Benin aan een vazal-koning in het zuid-oosten: Mahin' (AR-BD 1909: 23, TMS AM-254-1: old inventory card). Mahin is an area west of Benin City on the coast and lies in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Figure 18: Documentation describing Sanders's initial donation of a brass plateau with figures (AM-673-35; *cat.* 11.15) to the Wereldmuseum. The artwork was ultimately donated to the Afrika Museum. WM archive in Metaalhof: Sanders donation folder 1994.



The Piet and Ida Sanders collection

Piet Sanders (1912-2012) and his wife Ida Sanders (1915-2010) donated two Benin objects. An idiophone, or clapper, in the shape of a bronze bird on a staff (WM-73123; *cat.* 24.2) to the Wereldmuseum in 1998 and a brass platform with a group of figures (AM-673-35; *cat.* 11.15) to the Afrika Museum in November 2007. The 2007 donation had been originally offered for donation to the Wereldmuseum in 1998 but the offer was later withdrawn and instead it was given to the Afrika Museum as the relationship between Sanders and the Wereldmuseum had greatly deteriorated due to the museum's perceived lack of interest in African collections at that time (fig. 18).


Described as a 'Bird of Prophecy' (TMS: WM-73123), the musical instrument made a sound by striking

the bird figure on its beak with a metal rod and fits well within the 'canon' of Benin Kingdom objects. The Metropolitan Museum has several of these so-called clappers in the collection. The term 'Bird of Prophecy' references the symbolism of the bird on the staff (The Met 2000-2020a, b; Nevadomsky 2020: 76-81). The idiophone was part of a donation of African objects given between 1994 and 1998. It was originally purchased from the Van der Pas en Van de Raadt Gallery in 1994. They in turn bought it in Brussels in 1993 (WM archive Metaalhof: Sanders donation folder 1994, personal communication Van der Pas en Van de Raadt Gallery 25 June 2020).

Apart from being a prominent lawyer for the Dutch state in the 1950s and later at the Erasmus University, Piet Sanders was a prolific art collector in partnership with his wife Ida. Together they donated African art

to both the Afrika Museum and the Wereldmuseum (Steenbergen 2012, Wikipedia-bijdragers 2020). The couple bought the brass group of figures (AM-673-35) from the influential and controversial art dealer Jacques Kerchache (1942-2001) in Paris around 1967. Kerchache was a noted French art dealer for about twenty years with a gallery in Paris from 1965 to 1980, and also one of the main initiators of the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac through his friendship with

president Jacques Chirac (Corbey 2000). He authored a number of books about art from different continents, including Africa (Viatte 2020, Bruno Mignot 2002-2020). However, his methods of acquiring and presenting artefacts have been the subject of some critique. Donation documentation from the Wereldmuseum shows that someone called 'Keita' gave this artwork a date of 18th century. According to 'Van Rijn' – likely to be Guy van Rijn, an African art consultant – it is of later manufacture.



Unlikely link to the 1897 British military campaign

Rosalie Hans
with Annette Schmidt

A number of artworks have entered the collections of the four museums with identification that they originated from the Kingdom of Benin, and some assumption of linkage to 1897. This provenance research has sought to look at all assumptions critically through documentation, art historical analysis and consultation with specialists and individuals. Research has revealed that for 46 of the pieces a link to the events of 1897 in Benin City is unlikely. One of the reasons for this assessment is that certain objects do not appear to be from the Kingdom of Benin but from other areas of Nigeria, while others were seemingly misidentified through earlier documentation. In other cases, the date of acquisition makes a post-1897 manufacture date more likely and stylistic features of the pieces reflect this later dating.

Benin River paddles

In 1898 and 1905, the Museum Volkenkunde and the Wereldmuseum respectively acquired Benin paddles (RV-1165-1, -2 and WM-8483, WM-8484; *cat.* 17.1-4) that probably have no link to Benin City. The wooden figure (RV-1165-3) that was acquired by the Museum Volkenkunde at the same time was at an early stage identified as having been made by the Urhobo, a group of southern Nigeria, near the Kingdom of Benin.

A letter from Mr. J.J. Looyestein of 31 March 1898 details he is selling two wooden carved paddles (RV-1165-1, -2; *cat.* 17.1, -2) and a wooden figure (RV-1165-3) obtained from his brother-in-law who works on the steamship *S.S. Diana* on the 'Afrikaansche Lijn' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-26-172). As Looyestein is unable to come to the museum he gives the items to the skipper ('schipper') W. Koelewijn and asks the curator Johannes Schmeltz to determine the price and send the money back with the skipper with a note.⁷² Schmeltz responds to Looyestein on the same day and offers fl. 20⁷³ for the two paddles and the wooden figure (LdnRMV_

A01_209_00487). Both the museum register and the museum daybook give similar information: 'Bought from J.J. Loyestein through the intervention of W. Koelewijn in Leiden... from the West coast of Africa.'⁷⁴

Of all the European nations, Germany and Great Britain had the greatest trade interests in West Africa in the late 19th century. A Dutch newspaper reports in 1895 that the Nieuwe Afrikaansche Handelsvennootschap (NAHV), the African Steamship Co., the British and African Steamship Co. in Liverpool and the Woermannlinie in Hamburg had reached an agreement for ships from the German company to stop in the port of Rotterdam (Scheepvaart 1895). We can assume that the ship *S.S. Diana* is likely to have been owned by a British or German shipping company going to Africa. A search for the ship itself has not yielded any results despite ship lists being available from 1898 (Morse & Swiggum 2020).

In 1905 the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam (WM-8483, WM-8484; *cat.* 17.3, -4) bought from Gerd Anton Gerdes a number of paddles. There are two Gerd Anton Gerdes listed in the city archive of Rotterdam, one born in 1867, another in 1890. Both

72 Original Dutch text: 'Wees u zoo goed en bepaal zelf de prijs maar en geef het de schipper maar mede met een briefje' (LdnRMV_A1_26_172).

73 20 Dutch guilders equal around €280 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

74 Translated from Dutch: 'Aangekocht van J.J. Loyestein te Hage door tussenkomst van W. Koelewijn te Leiden... van de Westkust van Afrika' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-7-211/213; also see MR-L: NL-LdnRMV_A03_045_0045).

were employed on ships alternatively as boat worker, sailor, ship's cook and could potentially have been the seller of these objects (Stadsarchief Rotterdam 1880-1940b). As the youngest Gerd Anton Gerdes would have been fifteen years old at the time of the sale, he seems a less plausible candidate. A Wereldmuseum register lists four items that were sold by Gerdes on 20 April 1905 for fl. 8.⁷⁵ Apart from the two paddles, the third (WM-8485) is described as an elephant's tail but is reported missing and the fourth (WM-8486) is not described and does not exist as a number in the museum's collection database. The ongoing 'Barcode project' during which all the Rotterdam objects are being checked, registered and provided with a barcode has not revealed the missing object.

The exact origin of the Museum Volkenkunde paddles was debated almost as soon as the paddles entered the museum: 'Also from Benin are probably these 2 brown, wooden, carved out paddles.'⁷⁶ However, Joseph Marquart, who was curator Africa and the Americas at the Museum Volkenkunde from 1900-1910 suggested that one of the wooden paddles (RV-1165-2) might

have come from the Itsekiri people, living near the Benin river delta. Given his research on the Leiden Benin collection (Marquart 1913), this is an authoritative comment (Schmitt 1990). Moreover, older documentation cards also state 'southern Nigeria' instead of Benin. In addition Von Luschan (1919: 498) casts doubt on the prior assumption that these paddles were from Benin City. He posits that they were made for 'export', and cited a similar comment made to him by A.W. Franks – most likely Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826-1897) – in 1878 in Paris when they were looking at similar objects. Franks was a noted antiquary and from 1866 to 1896 the first Keeper of British Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography at the British Museum (British Museum 2020).

The Wereldmuseum documentation lists the paddles (WM-8483, WM-8484) as 'from the Congo.'⁷⁷ A year later a rectification is placed in the annual report identifying the paddles as being from Benin after they have been compared with a similar object in the 'ethnographic museum in Basel, Switzerland.'⁷⁸

Von Luschan identifies the makers of the four paddles (RV-1165-1, RV-1165-2, WM-8483, WM-8484) as Jekri,

75 8 Dutch guilders in 1905 equal about €101 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

76 Translated from Dutch: 'Eveneens uit Benin zijn waarschijnlijk afkomstig 2 bruinhouten, opengewerkte roeispanen' (AR-L 1897-1898: 20).

77 Translated from Dutch: 'van den Kongo' (AR-R 1905: 30).

78 Translated from Dutch: 'het ethnografisch museum te Bazel' (AR-R 1906: 31).

describing them as people living on the Benin River with only a loose connection ('lockerer Zusammenhang') to the Kingdom of Benin (von Luschan 1919: 498). A 1898 account written by Harold Bindloss who travelled in what he terms 'the Niger Country', suggests that the paddles were sold to passengers and crews on ships (Bindloss 1898: 193, 303). Zachary Kingdon, curator of African collections at the World Museum Liverpool agrees with the sources above: 'We have many of these [paddles in the collection of the World Museum Liverpool] and most are said to come from the Benin River, but not the Benin Kingdom' (personal communication 9 April 2020). Similar paddles in the collection of the British Museum are also listed as coming from Benin River rather than Benin City (The British Museum 2020d, e).

Lower Niger Delta Bells

The Museum Volkenkunde register of 1920 lists nine newly acquired bronze bells as (RV-1985-1 to -9; *cat.* 5.7-14) 'Purchase from Ernst Ripakewitz in Bergedorf near Hamburg. March 1920.'⁷⁹ The annual report mentions the acquisition as 'Nine bronze objects (antiquities) were purchased

from Benin (series 1985).'⁸⁰ Five bells (RV-1985- 1, -2, -3, -6, -7) are described as Yoruba, two (RV-1985-4, -5) have no clear origin label and another two (RV-1985-8, -9) are described as 'Bini' (see footnote 1). A faded note on the inventory card of one bell (RV-1985-9) says 'Not found (1941)',⁸¹ which means that bell has been missing for 70 years. Based on the object characteristics of all nine bells their likely provenance is from the lower Niger Delta rather than from the Kingdom of Benin. Apart from the address written on the letters of Ernst Ripakewitz stating that he lived at the Gärtnerstrasse 27 in Bergedorf near Hamburg, little is known about him. Consul Flaes of the Dutch Consulate in Hamburg describes him as 'a person living in Bergedorf.'⁸²

The first correspondence pertaining to the offer of these bells dates to 8 December 1919, when consul Flaes forwards an offer, with photographs, made by Ripakewitz of 9 'Benin (Niger Delta) bronzes.'⁸³ Ripakewitz's message states: These are very old pieces and I guarantee their authenticity.'⁸⁴ The consul asks if there is any interest from

79 Translated from Dutch: 'Aankoop van Ernst Ripackewitz [sic] te Bergedorf bij Hamburg. Maart 1920' (MR-L: LdnRMV_A03_059_116).

80 Translated from Dutch: 'Aangekocht werden negen bronzen voorwerpen (oudheden) uit Benin (Serie 1985)' (AR-L 1919-1920: 10).

81 Translated from Dutch: 'Niet gevonden (1941).'

82 Translated from Dutch: 'een te Bergedorf wonend persoon' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-98-41).

83 Translated from Dutch: 'Benin (Niger-delta) Bronzen'.

84 Translated from German: 'Es handelt sich um sehr alte Stücke und garantiere ich für die Echtheit.'

the museum (NL-LdnRMV-A1-98-41). In correspondence from 24 December 1919, Ripakewitz writes to Juynboll, the curator of the Museum Volkenkunde: 'From the General Consulate in Hamburg I received the announcement that you are the buyer of the 9 Benin bronzes according to the photographs sent, at the price of fl. 500, and I will send them over there myself.'⁸⁵ The curator responded on 24 December 1919 with a request to ask the Dutch consulate for an export permit (NL-LdnRMV-A1-226-366/368a). Correspondence continues from 2 January to 17 April 1920, and covers a dispute about the museum's delayed payment (NL-LdnRMV-A1-99-261 to -265, 266/267, -268 to -271/272).

Louis Noë: a Dutch ambassador in Nigeria

In 1963 the Tropenmuseum purchased fourteen bronze, wooden and ivory items (TM-3323-67 to -72, -84, -85, -90 to -92, -98, -99, -102; *cat. 8.11-13, 11.14, 11.33, 11.38-43, 11.46-47, 19.11*) from Louis Noë (Volksrust, South Africa 12 April 1898 – The Hague, the Netherlands 31 July 1977), in The

Hague. Based in Lagos, Noë was the Dutch ambassador to Nigeria and Togo from 1960 to 1964 (NL-HaNA 2008, De Telegraaf 1977). He was born in South Africa and his family moved to Amsterdam in 1901 (Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief 1930). In 1919, he married Johanna Jetske Idenburg, while working as 'Indisch ambtenaar' (official in Indonesia) (de Graaff & Van Vliet 1994). He and his wife went to live in Jakarta soon after their marriage and stayed there until at least 1938. Their four children were born in Indonesia (Haags Gemeentearchief n.d.). From 1958 to 1960 Noë was ambassador in Monrovia before moving to Nigeria. It is assumed that Noë was 'well-informed about indigenous art and ethnographic objects' (NL-HaNA 1910).

In a letter dated 3 November 1962, Noë offered to collect objects in Nigeria. As soon as the Tropenmuseum had accepted the offer, Noë contacted John Picton, the curator of the National Museum in Lagos - which Noë describes as the Museum of Antiquities - who agreed to advise him (TMS: TM-3323-1). Picton worked in Nigeria for the Department of Antiquities from 1961 until 1970 after which he worked at the British Museum until 1979. From 1979 to 2003 he was based at the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London where he is now

85 Translated from German: 'Von dem General Consulat in Hamburg erhalte ich die Anzeige dass Sie Käufer der 9 Benin Bronzes nach ingesandter Fotografie zum Preise von Hfl. 500 sind, und soll ich dieselben nach dort senden' (NL-LdnRMV-A1-98-241); 500 Dutch guilders in 1919 equal around €3115 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

the Emeritus Professor in African Art (AHRB 2006 and Hellmann 2017).

Picton put together a small and varied collection of different materials which Noë sent to the Tropenmuseum. However, Noë also offered his private collection that was already in The Hague. The Tropenmuseum agreed with the price of £500 for both collections. Noë's private collection in The Hague is the source of all the artworks identified as from Benin (NL-HaNA-KIT-4418_188 and NL-HaNA-KIT-7501_77).

Picton was contacted about the collection, and his recollection of it. Picton commented on legal aspects of Noë's collection writing: by email on 9 April 2020: '[...] I have looked very quickly through the material you sent me and can assure you that [...] there is nothing that would have been a prohibited export. There are many things that were not covered by the antiquities legislation then in force, and many others well-represented in the museum collection. As to the material from Benin City, there are two wooden memorial heads that would have come under the antiquities legislation but the Nigerian museum had good examples of them already. As to the brass castings, as far as I can tell from a quick look, they are all works that were more-or-less new when they were purchased, and thus not of interest within the

legislation then in force' (email from John Picton, 9 April 2020). Moreover, legislation concerning the prevention of buying and selling of antiquities was not in place until 1974 (Ojedokun 2012). Although this clarifies the circumstances and assumptions at the time, further research still needs to be carried out to clarify all aspects of this acquisition.

Gallery Kouw Kunst en Antiekhandel

On 11 March 1964, the Tropenmuseum purchased a bronze figure (TM-3382-1; *cat.* 11.34) from Kouw Kunst en Antiekhandel, located on Spui 4 in Amsterdam. The gallery existed from 1953 to 1999, mainly at the Langebrugsteeg 2 in Amsterdam and was run by Henk Kouw (1920-2001) and his wife Greet Kouw. Their collecting practices included acquiring objects from an African dealer in Paris, from 'runners' in the Netherlands, in London and during collecting trips, none of which went to Nigeria (Wentholt 2017). In total the NMVW collection holds 40 objects bought from gallery Kouw across the four museum locations. According to art dealer and consultant Jan Joris Visser, Kouw was a dealer who sold low-cost and less valuable objects that were unlikely to be from before 1897.

The tobacco trader Carel Blazer

The Wereldmuseum bought four small brass manillas (WM-23486a-d; *cat.* 14.7) from Carel Blazer (1873-1934)⁸⁶ in 1916 (AR-R 1916: 23). In the late 15th century, Portuguese merchants were the first Europeans to trade with West Africa. Among the goods they took to Benin were manillas, objects in the shape of an arm ring. They were used as currency by Europeans who traded with Benin mainly to purchase enslaved people, gold, ivory and pepper (Green, 2019: 117, 164). The Oba of Benin had a monopoly on this trade and Edo people melted down manillas to make brass and bronze artworks for the Oba. Only the Oba or high-ranking dignitaries were permitted to own bronze objects. From the 15th to the late 19th century, the art of casting bronze flourished as a result of the large-scale import of manillas. These brass manillas could have come from anywhere in West Africa, there is no specific reason they would have come from the Benin military campaign.

The Mak van Waay auction house

The Wereldmuseum (WM-29726 and WM-29727; *cat.* 11.35-36) purchased

86 See earlier for information on Carel Blazer WM-23485.

two figurines on Tuesday 21 January 1947 at the Mak van Waay auction house in the 'Gebouw Leesmuseum' of Amsterdam. S.J. Mak van Waay (1834-1880) founded the first branch of this well-known auction house in 1839 in Dordrecht. In 1918 his grandson, Anton Mak van Waay opened a branch of the auction house in Amsterdam. This eventually led to the establishment of the Art and Antiques Auction Company at Rokin 102 in Amsterdam by Siem Jacob Mak van Waay, the son of Anton, who ran the auction house until 1945. The auction company was then continued with great success by H.S. Nienhuis, which drew the interest of auction house Sotheby's. They opened their Dutch location close to Mak van Waay in 1972 and acquired Mak van Waay in 1974, after which the Amsterdam name ceased to exist (Mak 2019; RKD 2020a).⁸⁷

The two Benin 'warriors' were sold as lot 1166 (Fig. 19) (Mak van Waay 1947) and registered as 'two bronze standing male figures. Benin, Nigeria.' We know that the two figures were bought together and thought to be from Benin (AR-R 1947: 8). The figures were brought to the auction by 'Vecht',

87 The archive of Mak van Waay until 1945 is in the RKD-Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis with archive number NL-HaRKD.0573. See website: <https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/collections/573>; documentation after 1947 is held in the Sotheby's archive.

Figure 19: Cover of the Mak van Waay auction catalogue no.86 with on the right the page with auction number 1166, listed under 'East-Asian Art.' Scan provided by Sotheby's, Amsterdam.



which likely refers to 'Kunstzalen Vecht' in Amsterdam.

In 1947 Kunstzalen Vecht was located at Rokin 30, and was run by Aäron Vecht and his son Jack, who had to hide during the Second World War, while their business was taken under management by the Nazi occupation. After the war they took it under their own management again and rebuilt their business (RKD 2020c). Upon inquiry in July 2020, the current owner of Kunstzalen Vecht mentioned

that due to the effects of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands from 1940 to 1945 knowledge about the acquisition and sale of objects as well as archives during and shortly after the war may have been lost.

The antiquary and librarian Edgar Beer

Both the annual report and inventory cards of the Wereldmuseum confirm that the figurine with two birds (WM-



Figure 20: Female figure bought from Galerie Lemaire. Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, WM-32519.

The waist ornament is described as ‘These hangers are part of the typical attire of those dignitaries who are characterised by their beaded vest and by the priestly “apex” on their bead covered helmet. They are hung on the belt around the waist in groups of three.’⁸⁹ Even though, the ornament depicts a Portuguese soldier, clearly referencing earlier work, it is probably a twentieth century object inspired by historic Benin art.

Galerie Lemaire

In January 1950, the Wereldmuseum purchased a ‘bronze arm ring – Nigeria, Benin’ (WM-30268; *cat.* 3.12) from M.L.J. Lemaire.⁹⁰ In a letter to the director of 12 December 1949 Lemaire explains that he is sending the object to the museum for review and notes the cost as fl. 45⁹¹ (Metaalhof depot: Inventory card WM-30268, AR-R 1950: 14). Lemaire

29962; *cat.* 11.9) and the pendant (WM-29965; *cat.* 19.10) purchased from the renowned art dealer Edgar Beer⁸⁸ in 1948 came from Benin, Nigeria (AR-R 1897: 6). We do not know where exactly he obtained these pieces.

88 Please see page 60 for full biographical details of Edgar Beer.

89 Translated from Dutch: ‘Deze hangers behoren tot de typische uitrusting die waardigheidsbekleders, die door hun kralenhemd en door de priesterlijke “apex” op hun met kralen bedekte helm gekentekend zijn. Zij worden ten getale van drie aan de gordelband om het middel gedragen’ (inventory card WM-29965).

90 Please see RV-2799-2 and RV-2837-1 for more information on Lemaire.

91 45 Dutch guilders equals around €200 in 2018 (IISG 2020).

goes on to note that he still has 'Benin elephant tusk' on offer, which the Wereldmuseum ultimately did not buy (Stadsarchief Rotterdam 1949). A couple of years later, the Wereldmuseum bought another Benin artwork from Lemaire, more specifically a bronze or brass figure (WM-32519; *cat.* 11.37). It was part of a group of objects (WM-32512 to WM-32532) that were purchased in 1951 or 1952. The figure displays none of the characteristics traditionally associated with the Queen Mother and other female figures of Benin royal court art (fig. 20). The headdress, marks – cowrie shells or cicatrices? – on the legs all seem to indicate that this piece is not typical or in keeping with pre-1897 Benin artworks (Kaplan 1993). Follow-up research at the Metropolitan Museum, which holds the photographic archives of the Galerie Lemaire, deferred due to current travel restrictions, might yield more information.

A loan by van der Mandele

The hip pendant (WM-44952; *cat.* 19.8), originally given on loan by Karel Paul van der Mandele (1880-1975) in Rotterdam in April 1957 was registered as 'Loan from Mr. K.P. van der Mandele in Rotterdam (April 1957) Bronze mask,

Benin, W. Africa.⁹² It is currently part of the Wereldmuseum collection, but it is unclear when the loan was converted into a collection item. It is known that van der Mandele was a prominent citizen involved in several institutions including the African Studies Centre (ASC), which was established in 1947 in Leiden and is now part of Leiden University (see Wikipedia-bijdragers 2019).

Uncovered in the Bouwcentrum

A brass commemorative head (WM-67778; *cat.* 8.6) was uncovered in the Bouwcentrum (Building Centre), Rotterdam in 1980. As no one claimed it, the head was subsequently given to the Wereldmuseum for safekeeping. The database noted 'No special historical or artistic value can be assigned to the head'⁹³ (Bouwcentrum Rotterdam 2018). The head is documented in the following manner:

A good example of contemporary commercial yellow-cast art such as it is practiced in the vicinity of Douala (Cameroon) today. The head appears to be an imitation of the head depicted in Table 59 in F. von Luschan's 'Altertüemer

92 Translated from Dutch: 'Bruikleen van de heer Mr. K.P. van der Mandele te Rotterdam (April 1957). Bronzen Maskertje, Benin, W. Afrika' (AR-R 1957-1958: 10).

93 Translated from Dutch: 'Aan de kop is geen bijzondere historische of artistieke waarde toe te kennen.'

von Benin' 1919, but shows some striking deviations. For example, the hole in the top of the head is too small to put in (as is the traditional application) an elephant tusk. The trade price of these kind of castings is around fl. 600.⁹⁴

Afrika Museum and the loan collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

In 2005, the then director of the Afrika Museum bought two bronze or brass figures (AM-652-9, -10; *cat.* 11.21, 11.22) from someone acting for the estate of Felix Valk (1929-1999). Felix Valk was founder and manager between 1965 and 1970 of *Galerie 20* in Arnhem and Amsterdam for contemporary art and worked as director of the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam from 1981 to 1987 (RKD 2020b). His sister bequeathed his private collection of contemporary African art to the Afrika Museum in 1999 where it was exhibited in 2006 in a dedicated display. The two historic figures were not part of the bequest. According to museum documentation, both objects were in Felix Valk's private collection before

1970. Yet, Valk appears to have started collecting African objects only after 1981 and probably even after 1993 when he opened *Galerie 20* in Arnhem selling 'non-western' art, so the date of 1970 is speculative. It is possible that Valk bought these objects on one of his trips to Nigeria or elsewhere in Africa but no personal documentation on his collection or travels have been found in the Felix Valk/*Galerie 20* archive (RKD 2020b, Van Capelleveen 2006, Welling 2006, Vermaat 2011: 96-98). The otherwise sparsely filled out acquisition record also mentioned that J.P. Jernander (1939-2015) thought that this object is 'a good piece [...] dating from the beginning of the 19th century' (also see Claessens 2015). However, later identifications attribute it to the early 20th century (TMS: AM-652-10).

The Afrika Museum acquired a wooden commemorative head (AM-11-12; *cat.* 8.14) from Klaus Clausmeyer (1887- 1968) in Düsseldorf between 1954 and 1967. It became part of the loan collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Clausmeyer was a German artist and collector of objects from Africa and Oceania. In 1966 the city of

94 Translated from Dutch: 'Goed voorbeeld van hedendaagse commerciële geelgieterkunst zoals deze in de omgeving van Douala (Kameroen) wordt bedreven en vandaag uitgevoerd. De kop lijkt een nabootsing van de Tafel 59 afgebeelde kop van F. von Luschan

'Altuertuemer von Benin' 1919 maar vertoont enkele markante afwijkingen. Zo is het gat boven in het hoofd te klein om (zoals de traditionele toepassing is) er een olifantstand in te zetten. De handelsprijs van dit soort gietstukken is in de buurt van fl. 600,-' (TMS: WM-67778); 600 Dutch guilders equal around € 1890 (IISG 2020).

Cologne bought 550 African objects from his collection, which are now in the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum (Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum 2020). The acquisition date can be put at the late fifties but Clausmeyer started collecting from the First World War onwards, thus it is possible this object was collected before 1945 and made pre-1897 (Wikipedia-Autoren 2020c). According to information from the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Clausmeyer never travelled to the African continent himself, but instead bought and exchanged objects on the western art market. As an artist, he had no interest in documenting or cataloguing his collection (Velprecht 1972: VII). No documentation has been found showing where or when Clausmeyer bought these objects for his collection (Velprecht 1972: IV). More information might be acquired through provenance research being currently undertaken at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum.

A figure seated on a box that can be opened (AM-17-43; *cat.* 11.20) was purchased at auction from Sotheby's in London⁹⁵ in 1956 by Miss Elisabeth Van Croonenburg for her private collection. It was donated in 1963 to the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and

became part of the loan collection of the Afrika Museum. The number 3233 on the photograph of the inventory card could be an auction number. William Fagg, an authority on Benin chronology, in 1977 stated that it was 'Made around 1910 for altar of lower chief, perhaps from the birth village of the mother of the current Oba, about 30 miles from Benin.' This matches the description saying it is 'a piece from a later period, probably 19th century.'⁹⁶ Miss van Croonenburg (1908-18 June 1965) was the sister of J.B. van Croonenburg, a father in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CCSp) who worked for the Afrika Museum from 1966 to 1972 as secretary of the board and as curator for the collection (De Tijd De Maasbode 1965). However, he was involved with the museum from its establishment in 1958.

The Afrika Museum purchased on 13 January 1968 a small ivory tusk (AM-138-3; *cat.* 13.3) from Henricus Maas (1929-2006), chaplain at the Sint Petrus parish in Oisterwijk from 1958 to 1970.⁹⁷ It is unclear how Maas acquired his African objects collection.⁹⁸ We do know that Maas was

95 Sotheby's archives/catalogues, are inaccessible because of copyright laws (29-07-2020). Non-digitised auction catalogues are at the British Library and the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (The British Library 2020).

96 Translated from Dutch: 'Een beeld uit een later tijdperk, vermoedelijk 19e eeuw'

97 More information on Henricus Maas: *Geschiedenis van Best* 2020.

98 Email correspondence with the Odulphus parish in Best revealed that no extra information is available. The St. Petrus parish in Oisterwijk has not responded as yet (email 19s November 2020).

in contact with Van der Straete – ‘the most outstanding collector/dealer in Belgium of the subsequent generation’ (Corbey 1999: 12) – as another object in the same object series had originated from that collection. This tusk could have come from him or others in a similar African art network. William Fagg suggested in 1977, that the piece was made in the 20th century.

Two arm rings (AM-178-1, AM-192-5; *cat.* 2.6-7) were bought from Willem Geyskens (1923-1989), Diest (Belgium) in 1968. Two years later, in 1970, a small bronze ‘oracle’ (AM-254-2; *cat.* 15.1), a terracotta commemorative head (AM-254-3; *cat.* 8.15) were bought together with a bronze commemorative head (AM-254-1; *cat.* 8.7), discussed earlier. The arm rings were initially identified as from Cameroon – also written on the inventory card – but later established as coming from north-east Nigeria. Geyskens lived in Diest, and later in Tessenderlo (both in Belgium), at the time of his interactions with the Afrika

Museum. According to several auction house catalogues he collected objects in Nigeria ‘in situ’ when he worked there as ‘wood merchant’ (The Yale University Art Gallery 2020, Catawiki 2018). He sold more than 250 objects to the Afrika Museum. According to the online ‘African Heritage Research & Documentation Centre’, Geyskens ‘imported Tropical wood, but due to his good contacts in Nigeria he was able to bring out large quantities mainly of Yoruba Art, a.o. most of the known Ogboni “bronzes”’ (African Heritage Documentation and Research Centre 2020). William Fagg, who commented on the oracle in August 1977 wrote: ‘this could be an oracle of a relatively recent date, after the punitive expedition...’⁹⁹ Different experts have commented on the terracotta head (AM-254-3), identifying the piece as ‘old and very good’ or ‘new piece.’¹⁰⁰ William Fagg is quoted in records as noting an ‘authentic piece but thousands are in existence and are being made for the ancestor cult of the bronze casters.’¹⁰¹

99 Translated from Dutch: ‘misschien is dit orakel van relatief recente datum, van na de strafexpeditie.’

100 Translated from Dutch: ‘oud en zeer goed’, ‘nieuw exemplaar.’

101 Translated from Dutch: ‘authentiek exemplaar maar er zijn en worden er duizenden gemaakt voor de voorouderkultus van de bronsgieters.’

No link to the 1897 British military campaign

Rosalie Hans
with Annette Schmidt

Research has established only five manillas that have no link to the military campaign. Janny Ter Haar-Kruize (1923-2019) donated five manillas (RV-3467-29 to -33; *cat. 14.2-6*) to the Museum Volkenkunde in 1957 (LdnRMV_A01_166_0157). The objects were collected in the 1950s in Nigeria during her stay there. Mrs. Ter Haar-Kruize (1923-2019) and her husband D. Ter Haar moved to Pakistan after this donation. She wrote multiple books for adults and children related to her times living abroad including her time spent in Nigeria (*De tijd: dagblad voor Nederland* 1970).

Missing

**Rosalie Hans
with Annette Schmidt**

The missing artworks (p. 16) are mostly part of larger ensembles except for the cuff (AM-198-4; *cat.* 13.4) the Afrika Museum purchased from Theo A. H. M. Dobbelman (1906-1984) in 1969. The artwork became part of the loan collection of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Dobbelmann was the son of soap maker Pierre Dobbelmann who became an artist focusing on ceramics and working in Amsterdam (Wikipedia contributors 2020d). He is the author of the book 'Het Geheime Ogboni-genootschap: een bronskultuur uit Zuid-West Nigeria' (1976), published by the Afrika Museum.

Experts consulted in the 1970s disagreed on the age of the cuff. The inventory card states: 'declared genuine 16th century' by Mr. J.O. Bawodu, Dep. Of Antiquities, 11-12-'70.¹⁰² However, this bronze cuff was described by William Fagg as a 'cuff for

102 Translated from Dutch: 'Door Mr. J.O. Bawodu Dep. Of Antiquities, Lagos echt verklaard 16e eeuws, 11-12-'70'.

an ivory horn' and as originating from the 20th century. Its collection date makes very likely that it is post-1897. The cuff was reported missing in 2003, as written on the inventory card.

Catalogue

**Annette Schmidt
with Rosalie Hans**

No photograph is currently available for objects marked with *

1. Architectural element

1.1 Architectural element?, RV-1243-11

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 17,5 x 10,5 x 6,5 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster, acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military campaign of 1897



2. Arm cuff

2.1 Arm cuff, RV-1164-8

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13,6 x 8,1 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.2 Arm cuff, RV-1164-9

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13,9 x 8,4 x 7,8 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.3 Arm cuff, RV-1243-4

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 11,5 x 9,6 x 8 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.4 Arm cuff, RV-1243-5

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 12,7 x 9,9 x 9 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.5 Arm cuff, RV-1863-28

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13,5 x 8,5 x 9,2 cm
Exchanged with the Rautenstrauch-
Joest Museum,
acquisition date 01-09-1913
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 50-52
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.6 Arm cuff, AM-178-1

North-east Nigeria, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14 x 10 cm
Purchased from W. Geyskens,
acquisition date 19-12-1968
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, p. 81
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



2.7 Arm cuff, AM-192-5

North-east Nigeria, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 11 x 7 cm
Purchased from W. Geyskens,
acquisition date 07-07-1969
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, p. 81
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3. Arm ring

3.1 Arm ring, RV-1170-1

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 2,8 x 8,6 cm
Purchased from G.A. Frank,
acquisition date 04-05-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 33-36
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.2 Arm ring, RV-1170-2

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 6,2 x 10 cm
Purchased from G.A. Frank,
acquisition date 04-05-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 33-36
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.3 Arm ring, RV-1170-3

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 7 x 10,4 x 9,5 cm
Purchased from G.A. Frank,
acquisition date 04-05-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 33-36
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.4 Arm ring, RV-1170-4

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 6,2 x 10,3 x 9,5 cm
Purchased from G.A. Frank,
acquisition date 04-05-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 33-36
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.5 Arm ring, RV-1243-38

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 7,5 x 10,2 x 14 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.6 Arm ring, RV-1243-27

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 2,6 x 10,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.7 Arm ring, RV-2799-2

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 5 x 12 x 11 cm
Purchased from Galerie Lemaire,
acquisition date 08-04-1949
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 61-64
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.8 Arm ring, RV-1295-7

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 1,8 x 9,1 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 09-05-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.9 Arm ring, RV-1243-26

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze and coral, 0,8 x 8 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.10 Arm ring, RV-1295-6

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 9,4 x 8,6 x 0,5 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 09-05-1901

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.11 Arm ring, RV-2837-1

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 8,5 x 8 cm

Purchased from Galerie Lemaire,

acquisition date 12-1949

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 61-64

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.12 Arm ring, WM-30268

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 10,8 cm

Purchased from Galerie Lemaire,

acquisition date 1950

Municipality of Rotterdam,

Wereldmuseum, pp. 77-78

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.13 Arm ring/ Anklet/ Rattle,
RV-1243-29
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13,5 x 13,5 x 2 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.14 Arm ring/ Anklet/ Rattle,
RV-1286-6
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14 x 14 x 2,5 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



3.15 Arm ring/ Anklet/ Rattle,
RV-1243-28
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 18 x 18 x 3 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



4. Axe

* Axe, RV-1295-12 (missing)

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 09-05-1901

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 16,
36-43

5. Bell

5.1 Bell, RV-1164-10

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 10 x 5,5 x 5,5 cm

Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,

acquisition date 28-03-1898

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897

5.2 Bell, RV-1243-10

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 15 x 8 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.3 Bell, RV-1243-43

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19 x 10,7 x 10,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.4 Bell, RV-1286-5

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19,5 x 10 x 10,5 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.5 Bell, WM-15984

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 6,2 x 5,8 cm
Purchased from Museum für
Völkerkunde Hamburg,
acquisition date 1909
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 54
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.6 Bell, RV-1243-12

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 8,5 x 7 x 7 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Linked to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.7 Bell, RV-1985-8

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13 x 7,7 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.8 Bell, RV-1985-4

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15,5 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.9 Bell, RV-1985-1

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 21 x 9 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.10 Bell, RV-1985-2

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 21 x 9,5 x 2cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.11 Bell, RV-1985-3

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19,5 x 9 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.12 Bell, RV-1985-5

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 17,5 x 7,7 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.13 Bell, RV-1985-6

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 18 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



5.14 Bell, RV-1985-7

Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15,3 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



* Bell, RV-1985-9 (missing)
Niger Delta, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze
Purchased from E. Ripakewitz,
acquisition date 04-1920
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 72-73

6. Club

6.1 Club, RV-1355-3
Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 49,5 x 8 x 8 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 17-04-1902
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



7. Comb

7.1 Comb, RV-1243-8
Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 21,5 x 4,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



7.2 Comb, RV-1355-1
Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 48 x 9 x 1,4 cm
Bought from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 01-04-1902
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



7.3 Comb, RV-1355-2

Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 46,8 x 9 x 1,3 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 17-04-1902
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8. Commemorative head

8.1 Commemorative head,

RV-1163-2
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 36 x 26,5 x 26,5 cm
Purchased from H. Bey & Co.,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.2 Commemorative head,

RV-1164-4
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 24,2 x 20 x 22,8 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.3 Commemorative head,
RV-1164-2
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 50 x 24 x 27 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.4 Commemorative head,
RV-1164-3
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 52,5 x 30,5 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.5 Commemorative Head,
RV-2668-445
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 54 x 47 x 22,5 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.6 Commemorative head,
WM-67778
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 32,4 x 20 cm
Donated by Bouwcentrum Rotterdam,
acquisition date 1980
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 78-79
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.7 Commemorative head, AM-254-1
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20 x 13 x 18,5 cm
Purchased from W. Geyskens,
acquisition date 09-12-1970
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, pp. 65-66
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.8 Commemorative head, AM-595-1
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20 x 11,5 x 17 cm
Gifted by W. Spruit,
acquisition date 16-11-1999
NMVW, Afrika Museum, p. 66
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.9 Commemorative head,

RV-1286-1

Benin City, Nigeria

Wood and Brass/Bronze, 58,5 x 21,5 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,

acquisition date 29-04-1901

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.10 Commemorative head,

RV-1243-33

Benin City, Nigeria

Wood, 35 x 13,5 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 03-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.11 Commemorative head,

TM-3323-85

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Wood, 33,5 x 17 cm

Purchased from L. Noë,

acquisition date 1963

NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.12 Commemorative head,
TM-3323-98
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood, 36 x 19 x 19 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.13 Commemorative head,
TM-3323-99
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood and Brass/Bronze, 58 x 28 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.14 Commemorative head,
AM-11-12
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood, 60 x 28 cm
Purchased from K. Clausmeyer,
acquisition date between 1954 and
1967, pp. 79-80
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.15 Commemorative head,
AM-254-3
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Earthenware, 22 x 19 cm
Purchased from W. Geyskens,
acquisition date 09-12-1970
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, p. 81
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



8.16 Head on four-legged stand,
RV-1310-7
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19 x 10,5 x 11
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



9. Container

9.1 Container/Box, RV-1243-41
Benin City, Nigeria
Wood and Brass/Bronze, 20 x 28 x
10 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



9.2 Container, RV-2668-436
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 8 cm x 8 cm (lid);
12,5 x 10 cm (box)
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



9.3 Container, WM-23485

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Coconut, container 12,2 x 9 cm,
lid 3,6 x 5,6 cm
Purchased from C. Blazer,
acquisition date 1916
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 64-65
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



9.4 Container lid?, RV-1335-4

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 9 x 45 x 21 cm
Purchased from F. von Luschan,
acquisition date 30-11-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 48-50
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



* Gunpowder container, RV-1243-19 (missing)

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze,
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

10. Dagger

10.1 Dagger and scabbard,

RV-1243-46
Benin City, Nigeria
Iron, brass/bronze, leather and
wood; dagger 27 x 3 x 1 cm,
scabbard 25,2 x 5 x 2,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 11-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde,
pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British
military campaign of 1897



11. Figure

11.1 Figure, RV-1163-1

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 53 x 41,5 x 20 cm
Purchased from H. Bey & Co.,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.2 Figure, RV-2668-444

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 54 x 47 x 22,5 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.3 Figure, RV-1243-6

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 10 x 7,3 x 8,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.4 Figure, RV-1243-7

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15,5 x 6,3 x 15,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.5 Figure, RV-1243-45

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13 x 13,7 x 4,3 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 11-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.6 Figure, RV-1310-3

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15 x 19 x 6 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.7 Figure, RV-2668-433

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14,5 x 9 x 16,5 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.8 Figure, RV-2668-434

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 12 x 16 x 7 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.9 Figure, WM-29962

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 9 x 11 x 12 cm
Purchased from E. Beer,
acquisition date 1948
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 76-77
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.10 Figure, RV-1243-22

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15,5 x 9,5 x 5,3 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.11 Figure, RV-1243-23

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14,5 x 9 x 5,3 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.12 Figure, RV-1310-4

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14,5 x 22 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.13 Figure, RV-2668-432

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 15,7 x 5,5 x W. 24 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.14 Figure, TM-3323-70

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 31 x 20 x 10,5 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.15 Figure, AM-673-35

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19 x 26 cm
Gifted by P. & I. Sanders,
acquisition date 11-2007
NMVW, Afrika Museum, pp. 66-68
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.16 Figure, RV-1164-7

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 18,5 x 19 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-32
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.17 Figure, RV-1310-5

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 29 x 16 x 12 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.19 Figure, RV-2668-443

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 7 x 6,6 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.18 Figure, RV-2668-442

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 7 x 7 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.20 Figure, AM-17-43

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 21 x 7,5 x 7 cm
Donated from E. van Croonenburg,
acquisition date 1963
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, p. 80
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.21 Figure, AM-652-9
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 35 x 15 cm
Purchased from F. Valk,
acquisition date 2005
NMVW, Afrika Museum, p. 80
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.22 Figure, AM-652-10
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 32 x 15,5 x 12 cm
Purchased from F. Valk,
acquisition date 2005
NMVW, Afrika Museum, p. 79
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.23 Figure, RV-1164-6
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 22,5 x 11,5 x 7 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.24 Figure, RV-1164-5
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 24 x 16,5 x 28 cm
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.25 Figure, RV-1243-14

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 21 x 7,5 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.26 Figure, RV-2975-1

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 28,5 x 20 x 8,5 cm
Purchased from Galerie Lemaire,
acquisition date 14-01-1952
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.27 Figure, RV-1243-13

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 30,5 x 12 x 9,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.28 Figure, RV-2668-435

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20,5 x 7 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.29 Figure, RV-2668-437

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19 x 6,5 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.30 Figure, RV-2668-438

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19,5 x 5,5 x 6 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.31 Figure, RV-2668-439

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19 x 5.5 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.32 Figure, RV-2668-441

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14 x 8 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 54-57
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.33 Figure, TM-3323-90

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 25,5 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.34 Figure, TM-3382-1
 Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
 Ivory, 16,5 x 6,5 cm
 Purchased from Kouw Kunst en
 Antiekhandel,
 acquisition date 11-04-1964
 NMVW, Tropenmuseum, p. 74
 Unlikely link to the British military
 campaign of 1897



11.35 Figure, WM-29726
 Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
 Brass/Bronze, 15 x 5,5 x 3,5 cm
 Purchased from from Mak van Waay
 auction house,
 acquisition date 21-01-1947
 Municipality of Rotterdam,
 Wereldmuseum, p. 75-76
 Unlikely link to the British military
 campaign of 1897



11.36 Figure, WM-29727
 Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
 Brass/Bronze, 24,5 x 9 x 5,5 cm
 Purchased from from Mak van Waay
 auction house,
 acquisition date 21-01-1947
 Municipality of Rotterdam,
 Wereldmuseum, p. 75-76
 Unlikely link to the British military
 campaign of 1897



11.37 Figure, WM-32519

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 32 x 12 x 11,5 cm
Purchased from Galerie Lemaire,
acquisition date 1950
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 77-78
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.38 Figure, TM-3323-91

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19,5 x 6,8 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.39 Figure, TM-3323-67

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20 x 7,5 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.40 Figure, TM-3323-68

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20 x 11 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.41 Figure, TM-3323-71

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 12,5 x 6 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.42 Figure, TM-3323-72

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 11,5 x 6,8 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.43 Figure, TM-3323-92

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 28 x 12 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.44 Figure, RV-1243-32

Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 24 x 9,2 x 8,3 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.45 Figure, RV-1164-11 (missing)

Benin City, Nigeria
Ivory
Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 16,
28-33



11.46 Figure, TM-3323-84

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Ivory, 42 x 9,3 x 8,3 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



11.47 Figure, TM-3323-102

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Ivory, 29 x 5,5 x 4,5 cm
Purchased from L. Noë,
acquisition date 1963
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



* Figure, RV-1243-15 (missing)

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 16,
36-43

* Figure, TM-332-12 (missing)

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 10 x 8 cm
Donated by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 16, 54-57

* Figure, RV-2668-440 (missing)

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 12 cm
Donation by M. Knoops,
acquisition date 02-11-1926
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 16,
54-57

12. Hair ornament

12.1 Hair ornament, RV-1295-2

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze and coral, 0,7 x 11 x 33 cm

Bought from W.D. Webster, acquisition date 09-05-1901

NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military campaign of 1897



13. Horn

13.1 Horn, RV-1243-1

Benin City, Nigeria

Ivory, 3,7 x 44,5 x 4,8 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster, acquisition date 02-1900

NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military campaign of 1897



13.2 Horn, RV-1286-8

Benin City, Nigeria

Ivory, 30 x 3,3 x 3 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff, acquisition date 29-04-1901

NMWW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47

Proven link to the British military campaign of 1897



13.3 Horn, AM-138-3

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Ivory, 38 cm
Purchased from H. Maas,
acquisition date 13-01-1968
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, pp. 80-81
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



13.4 Cuff for a Horn, AM-198-4 (missing)

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze?, 6,2 x 6,3 cm
Purchased from Th.A.H.M.
Dobbelmann,
acquisition date 27-08-1969
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, pp. 16, 85



14. Manilla

14.1 Manilla, RV-1243-24

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 1,6 x 6,1 x 5,9 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



14.2 Manilla, RV-3467-29

Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 1,8 x 5,7 x 5,8 cm
Donated by J. ter Haar-Kruize,
acquisition date 03-09-1957
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 83
No link to the British military campaign
of 1897



14.3 Manilla, RV-3467-30

Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 1,9 x 5,8 x 5,9 cm

Donated by J. ter Haar-Kruize,

acquisition date 03-09-1957

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 83

No link to the British military campaign of 1897



14.4 Manilla, RV-3467-31

Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 1,7 x 5,7 x 5,8 cm

Donated by J. ter Haar-Kruize,

acquisition date 03-09-1957

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 83

No link to the British military campaign of 1897



14.5 Manilla, RV-3467-32

Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 1,6 x 5,9 x 5,8 cm

Donated by J. ter Haar-Kruize,

acquisition date 03-09-1957

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 83

No link to the British military campaign of 1897



14.6 Manilla, RV-3467-33

Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 2 x 5,9 x 5,8 cm

Donated by J. ter Haar-Kruize,

acquisition date 03-09-1957

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 83

No link to the British military campaign of 1897



14.7 Manilla, WM-23486 (a-d)
Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 6,1 x 1,9 cm
Purchased from C. Blazer,
acquisition date 1916
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 74-75
Unlikely link to the British
military campaign of 1897



15. Oracle

15.1 Oracle?, AM-254-2
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 12 x 9,5 x 11,5 cm
Purchased from W. Geyskens,
acquisition date 09-12-1970
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Afrika
Museum, p. 81
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



16. Ornament

16.1 Ornament strip, RV-1243-35
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze?, 18 x 82 x 11 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



16.2 Ornament?, RV-1243-31

Benin City, Nigeria

Textile, feather, fiber and cowrie,
14 x 2,5 x 2 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-11-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



17. Paddle

17.1 Paddle, RV-1165-1

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Wood, 174,5 x 18 cm

Purchased from J.J. Looyestein,
acquisition date 04-1898

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 70

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897

17.2 Paddle, RV-1165-2

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Wood, 172 x 17,6 x 3 cm

Purchased from J.J. Looyestein,
acquisition date 04-1898

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, p. 70

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



17.3 Paddle, WM-8483

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood, 162 x 13 cm
Purchased from G.A. Gerdes,
acquisition date 20-04-1905
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 70-71
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



17.4 Paddle, WM-8484

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood, 158,3 x 13,5 x 3,1 cm
Purchased from G.A. Gerdes,
acquisition date 20-04-1905
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 70-71
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



18. Peg

18.1 Peg?, RV-1243-40

Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 27,5 x 3,5 x 3,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19. Pendant

19.1 Pendant, RV-1163-3

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 18 x 13,8 x 5,7 cm
Purchased from H. Bey & Co.,
acquisition date 28-03-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.2 Pendant, RV-1243-30

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 17 x 14,5 x 4,8 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.3 Pendant, RV-1243-39

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 14,5 x 7 x 5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.4 Hip Pendant, RV-1243-20

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 19,5 x 14,5 x 4 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.5 Hip Pendant, RV-1243-21

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 20 x 13,8 x 6 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.6 Hip Pendant, RV-1286-4

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 18,5 x 11,8 x 6,3 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.7 Hip Pendant, RV-1310-1

(missing)
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 16,5 x 10 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 16,
43-47



19.8 Hip Pendant, WM-44952

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 16,7 x 11 cm
Purchased from K.P. van de Mandele,
acquisition date 04-1957
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 78
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.9 Hip Pendant, RV-1310-2

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 17,5 x 12,3 x 7 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,

acquisition date 03-06-1901

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.10 Pendant, WM-29965

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 23,5 x 14,5 x 2,7 cm

Purchased from E. Beer,

acquisition date 1948

Municipality of Rotterdam,

Wereldmuseum, pp. 76-77

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



19.11 Pendant, TM-3323-69

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 19,7 x 13 x 4,5 cm

Purchased from L. Noë,

acquisition date 1963

NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 73-74

Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



20. Pipe bowl

20.1 Pipe bowl, RV-1243-25

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 16,5 x 18 x 10,3 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21. Relief plaque

21.1 Relief plaque, RV-1164-1

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 44 x 19 x 6 cm

Purchased from Prof. J. Brinckmann,

acquisition date 28-03-1898

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 28-33

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.2 Relief plaque, RV-1170-5
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 47 x 20,7 x 9 cm
Purchased from G.A. Frank,
acquisition date 04-05-1898
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 33-36
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.3 Relief plaque, RV-1243-16
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 46 x 30,3 x 5,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.4 Relief plaque, RV-1243-17
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 45 x 20,5 x 6 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897

21.5 Relief plaque, RV-1243-18

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 45 x 21,5 x 7,5 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.6 Relief plaque, RV-1243-34

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 28,5 x 16,5 x 3,1 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,

acquisition date 03-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.7 Relief plaque, TM-1772-2018

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 44,5 x 37,5 cm

Donated by W.G. Tillman,

acquisition date 1994 but on a

long-term loan since 1939

NMVW, Tropenmuseum, pp. 52-54

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.8 Relief plaque, WM-15983

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 21,5 x 9 x 4 cm
Gifted by F. von Luschan,
acquisition date 01-1909
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 48-50
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.9 Relief plaque, RV-1286-3

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 37,5 x 17 x 4,7 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.10 Relief plaque, RV-1295-5

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 13,5 x 11 x 2,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 09-05-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.11 Relief plaque, RV-1335-1
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 39 x 31 x 4 cm
Purchased from F. von Luschan,
acquisition date 30-11-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 48-50
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.12 Relief plaque, WM-15985
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 45,3 x 19,5 x 6 cm
Purchased from Museum für
Völkerkunde Hamburg,
acquisition date 1909
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 54
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.13 Relief plaque, RV-1295-4
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 2 x 11 x 17,5 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 09-05-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.14 Relief plaque, RV-1335-2
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 3,9 x 44,2 x 17,5 cm
Purchased from F. von Luschan,
acquisition date 30-11-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 48-50
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.15 Relief plaque, RV-1335-3
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 44,5 x 31 x 3,5 cm
Purchased from F. von Luschan,
acquisition date 30-11-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 48-50
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.16 Relief plaque, WM-15986
Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 25,3 x 20 cm
Purchased from Museum für
Völkerkunde Hamburg,
acquisition date 1909
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, p. 54
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



21.17 Figure, RV-2771-3
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 5,8 x 10,7 x 14 cm
Purchased from E. Beer,
acquisition date 29-12-1948
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 60-61
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



22. Ring

22.1 Ring, RV-1286-7

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze and coral, 2,3 x 2,2 x 2,7 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



23. Sculpture

23.1 Sculpture, RV-1286-9

Benin City, Nigeria

Ivory, 29,5 x 7 x 5,2 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24. Staff

24.1 Staff, RV-1243-9

Benin City, Nigeria

Brass/Bronze, 31 x 12 x 8,5 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.2 Staff, WM-73123

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 30 x 10,6 x 13 cm
Donated by I. & P. Sanders,
acquisition date 1998
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 66-68
Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.3 Staff, RV-1243-42

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 34 x 11,5 x 12 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.4 Staff, RV-1243-36

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 74,4 x 2,1 x 2,2 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.5 Staff, RV-1310-6

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 84 x 3,4 x 2,2 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 03-06-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.6 Staff, RV-1243-44

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze, 35,5 x 2,7 x 3,4 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 11-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



24.7 Staff, RV-1243-37

Benin City, Nigeria
Iron, 111 x 15 x 8 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 03-1900
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897





24.8 Rattle Staff, RV-1355-4 ▲
Benin City, Nigeria
Wood, 145 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 17-04-1902
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897

24.9 Rattle staff, RV-4649-1 ▼
Benin Kingdom, Nigeria
Wood, 158 cm
Bought from E. Beer,
acquisition date 28-04-1973
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 76-77
Unlikely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



25. Sword

25.1 Ceremonial Sword, RV-1286-2
Benin City, Nigeria
Iron, 7,8 x 65 x 16,5 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 29-04-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897

25.2 Ceremonial Sword, RV-1355-5
Benin City, Nigeria
Iron, 19,5 x 97,5 x 24 cm
Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,
acquisition date 17-04-1902
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



25.3 Ceremonial sword, RV-1295-3

Benin City, Nigeria
Brass/Bronze and iron, 1,9 x 43 x 9 cm
Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 09-05-1901
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



26. Tail

* Tail of an elephant, WM-8485

(missing)
West-Africa
Elephant,
Purchased from G.A. Gerdes,
acquisition date 20-04-1905
Municipality of Rotterdam,
Wereldmuseum, pp. 16, 70-71

27. Tusk

27.1 Tusk, RV-1148-1

Benin City, Nigeria
Ivory, 220 x 12 cm
Purchased from M. Wolff,
acquisition date 21-12-1897
NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 26-28
Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



27.2 Tusk, RV-1286-10

Benin City, Nigeria

Ivory, 210 x 13,5 cm

Purchased from J.F.G. Umlauff,

acquisition date 29-04-1901

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 43-47

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897

27.3 Tusk, TM-2289-3

Benin Kingdom, Nigeria

Ivory, 33,5 x 9 x 9 cm

Donated by Royal Scottish Museum,

acquisition date 16-11-1953

NMVW, Tropenmuseum, p. 64

Likely link to the British military
campaign of 1897



28. Vessel

28.1 Vessel, RV-1243-2

Benin City, Nigeria

Pottery, 8,5 x 9 x 8 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



28.2 Vessel (with its content), RV-1243-3

Benin City, Nigeria

Pottery, cowrie shells, organic
materials, stones; 10,5 x 15 cm

Purchased from W.D. Webster,
acquisition date 02-1900

NMVW, Museum Volkenkunde, pp. 36-43

Proven link to the British military
campaign of 1897



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Corrigenda

Subject: Provenance volume 2: The Benin collections at the National Museum of World Cultures (2021)
Date: 27 June 2023

1. Introduction, page 13

The last sentence in the left column and first sentence in the right column should read: ‘On the basis of current research, we conclude that NMVW holds 113 pieces that can be definitively connected to the military campaign led by British forces against Benin City in early February 1897. Art historical comparison and scientific analysis suggest that a further 10 items purchased on the art market at a later date, may well have been part of the collection in Benin City looted in 1897.’

2. Link proven to the 1897 British military campaign, page 25

The first sentence should read: ‘The NMVW holds 113 objects, including carved elephant’s tusks, bronze plaques, Oba’s heads, pendants and figures that have a proven link to the military campaign of 1897.’

3. Likely link to the 1897 British military campaign, page 59

The first sentence should read: ‘Ten objects have a possible link to the looting of Benin City in 1897.’

4. Catalogue, page 92, 3.11 Arm ring, RV-2837-1

The last two lines should read: ‘Likely link to the British military campaign of 1897’

5. Catalogue, page 112, 11.26 Figure, RV-2975-1

The last two lines should read: ‘Likely link to the British military campaign of 1897’