

Jahazi Vol 10 Issue 1

Reclaiming Our Cultural Heritage

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The Journal is the result of an initiative by Twaweza Communications - Nairobi, and founding Editor, Bantu Mwaura, to encourage dialogue between academicians and art practitioners. The space is used to capture practical experiences in arts, culture and performance in Kenya and the East African region and suggest theoretical and policy directions.

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From the Editor

This Pan-African edition of *Jahazi* tackles head-on recent debates and discussions around the restitution of cultural heritage stolen from the African continent and the global south in general. The title of the Issue, *Reclaiming Our Cultural Heritage*, infers that the global south is, and should actively seek return of its looted heritage currently held in museums and private collections in Europe and America. Writers share their experiences and perspectives on repatriation, restitution and restoration of our looted cultural heritage, the terms being used interchangeably in the articles without engaging with the mechanics of definitions. The dominant voice in the Issue is African though we also carry an article by three writers based in Europe. Contributors are drawn from diverse spheres and include the community, media and other cultural institutions. For the first time, the journal carries articles in French with English translations.

The title of the first section of the Issue is *'Bring Back Our People'* and focuses on people - in the broadest sense of the word - held hostage in museums and private collections, including those who were 'disappeared'. Writers refer to the skull of the early man in Zambia, that of the great Chiefs Mangi Meli and Hassan Omar Makunyanga of Tanzania who were ruthlessly executed by the German colonisers and their skulls taken away for 'research' before they disappeared. From Mozambique, Marilio Wane discusses restitution of photographs and images emanating from live exhibitions held in Portugal, of Mozambican men, women and children engaging in their 'authentic' cultural practices, their version of the barbaric practice of colonial human zoos. 'People' also includes *Vigango* of the Mijikenda in Kenya which symbolise departed souls who still participate in key activities in the homestead, and the missing bodies of leaders of colonial resistance such as Karambu Ole Senteu of the Maa community in Kenya. This section reflects on the objectification of the African by the colonial powers, which allowed their dehumanizing violence and subjugation of communities. The refusal by museums and private collectors to return these people denies closure to families and communities and violates their right to proper interment and placement of the deceased in the community's history. Further, it perpetuates the colonial mentality of commodification of the African seen since the slave trade. The repatriation of our people, in whatever form they currently exist, is a matter of concern and urgency.

In the second section titled *Bring Back Our Belongings*, writers reflect on the massive pillage and plunder of cultural objects by colonizers from the 19th century to date. From North Africa, the Merzoug Cannon of Algeria, innumerable treasures from the Magdala palace in Ethiopia, Queen Nefertiti's Bust and the Rosetta Stone from Egypt; Nok art and Benin Bronzes from Nigeria and from East Africa, royal emblems of the Bunyoro empire in Uganda and numerous cultural objects of the Babukusu in Kenya, stolen as the British and their allies massacred communities. These are a few of the commonly known items named in this Issue that help to illustrate the complexity and arduousness of the restitution process. The knee-jerk refusals from European and American museums and private collectors in response to requests for the return of Africa's stolen cultural heritage; tampering with paper trails of evidence, tying up processes with endless bureaucracy; these are just a few of the impediments noted in hampering urgent repatriation, restitution and restoration efforts. Though a few artefacts have trickled back, the global north needs to show moral responsibility and acknowledge that these artefacts were stolen and rightfully belong to Africa and that these should be returned with no conditions attached. In addition, they should cease to ignore the adverse socio-cultural and economic impact on Africa from the loss of this cultural heritage as they continue to reap profits from exhibitions.

One article reflects on the establishment of a 'Museum of the Continent's Culture' – a project initiated by the King of Morocco to highlight the richness of African cultural heritage. In what ways does this address the restitution quagmire for the continent? Another challenge Africa faces is the lack of a unified and strong voice in laying their claims thus providing the global north with a perfect opportunity to divide and rule.

The third and last section titled *Voicing and Building Institutions* explores key challenges within the continent that impede restitution efforts. Are governments actively engaged in identifying and claiming the stolen artefacts? Where there are myriad voices, which institution(s) and communities need to participate in the process and what are the requisite policies and legal frameworks that have been, or need to be put in place to enable sustained and positive efforts? What recourse do we have against blatant refusals? What does a decolonized museum in Africa look like?

Karibuni. Welcome. Bienvenue.

Mueni Lundi

From the Publisher

Kimani Njogu

This Special Issue of *Jahazi* has been made possible through a grant by *Africa No Filter* with the objective of contributing to shifting the narrative around the erroneous belief that Africans do not value their cultural heritage currently domiciled in the global North where museums are populated by artefacts taken away during the slave trade, under colonialism and in the postcolonial period. Heritage museums should hold the collections that have good provenance and have not at some point in their history, been acquired as a result of spoliation and/or illicit trade.

The colonial project in Africa was mainly driven by the urge to extract vital natural resources such as rubber and minerals through exploitation of Africa's labor force, plantations and mines and rationalized through a discourse of racial superiority. Cultural resources were targeted during the slave trade and later to populate museums in the colonial power and there was aggressive looting of shrines, palaces and public spaces for products. On their part, missionaries embarked on a discourse of demonizing cultural products by defining them as anti-Christian while simultaneously, in collusion with merchants, identifying some for packaging and shipping abroad. During formal colonisation, administrators and soldiers looted and sold or gifted artistic and cultural products to their leaders and museums. Others were taken to art markets and auctioned.

But Africa is asking that these products be returned to their home on the continent. The continued holding of the Benin Bronzes - looted from the capital of Benin (in modern day Nigeria) by British soldiers in 1897 and now spread across several museums in Europe and the USA - and the Rosetta Stone - seized by British soldiers from the French army in Egypt in 1801 and today one of the most popular exhibitions in the British Museum in London - are examples of how Africa's heritage continues to build the economic and cultural capital of the global North.

The narrative that Africa cannot take care of that which was stolen from it ought to be shifted systematically through amplification of multiple perspectives about restitution of cultural heritage in Africa. Those perspectives would need to address community claims, policy frameworks, infrastructural readiness, and the responsibility of former colonisers towards Africa. The youth of Africa ought to have access to their traditional cultural and artistic expression and its social and spiritual significance currently being enjoyed by Western countries.

Cultural heritage integrates values which can be used to serve a wide range of economic, social, historical, aesthetic, and political goals. It is also essential to the human experience because the heritage of people and of their past are critical to the understanding of the present and projection of the future. The continued withholding of Africa's cultural heritage denies the youth of Africa the right to cultural dignity and vital points of creative reference for contemporary innovations. They are growing completely unaware of the richness of the continent's cultural legacy.

The Issue also builds on ongoing work on cultural heritage being undertaken by Twaweza Communications in the arts, culture and media space for the enhancement of freedom of artistic expression. Additionally, it is inspired by the African Union theme for 2021 which provides an opportunity to anchor arts, culture and heritage pointedly in continental discourse. At the center of that discourse ought to be a conversation about restitution (*process by which cultural objects are returned to an individual or a community*), repatriation (*process by which cultural objects are returned to a nation or a state at the request of a government*) and the eventual returning of Africa's cultural heritage held in Europe, the USA and Asia.

Conversations about restitution and repatriation are about reclaiming memory, reflecting on identities and building more equitable societies. It is a questioning of appropriation of valuable socio-cultural products from Africa and denying the continent the right to know and learn from its past. African cultural heritage can be found in European and American museums, public and private collections, religious collections, cultural institutions, and archaeological laboratories, among other locations. To benefit from them, the youth of Africa would need to get visas to travel to the hosting countries

Without doubt, the speech by French president Emmanuel Macron which was given in Ouagadougou in 2017 and the 2018 Savoy-Sarr Report brought to the fore the pillage and looting of African cultural heritage during colonisation accelerated the restitution debate. However, African communities have always known that there were valuable products taken from them without consent earlier than the 20th century, but especially during the colonial period. Just as land - Africa's foremost heritage - was taken in the process of empire building, cultural products were targeted with the aim of enriching museums and research agenda in Europe and crafting the colonial narrative of conquest and domination.

In the case of Ethiopia, for example, during the battle of Magdala in 1868 in which Emperor Tewodros fought against a British military expedition led by General Robert Napier, the General brought museum experts to collect historical documents and movable cultural heritage from the library of Emperor Tewodros, which were taken to British museums. These included the crown of Emperor Tewodros. Later, during the fascist occupation of 1935 to 1941 when Mussolini sent his soldiers to avenge an earlier Italian defeat at the battle of Adwa in 1896, he also ordered the soldiers to dismantle the Obelisks of Axum as well as the Statue of the Lion of Judah in Addis Ababa. In Tanzania, during the Maji Maji War (1905-1907), the German Government took away valuable cultural products. Other products, including human remains such as the head of Mkwava, had been taken away before the 20th Century.

While some restitution has taken place such as that related to the Benin Bronzes in Nigeria and the Afro Aygeba Cross, Axum Obelisk, and manuscripts in Ethiopia, much still needs to be done. African governments are critical in making restitution and repatriation happen due to their authority and international legitimacy. They will, however, need to build policy and legislative mechanisms to facilitate the systematic restitution of this heritage. African governments will need to ratify key international instruments such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Furthermore, they will need to work with pan- African institutions and regional bodies to build synergies and coherence on restitution matters.

There is also need to build inventories of movable cultural heritage material which would include archaeological objects; anthropological objects; historical objects; technical objects; archive materials; library materials; audiovisual material and recorded and phonographical archive. Other inventories might include spiritual cultural heritage assets such as elements of folklore and elements of oral tradition. The inventories would provide the basis for determining whether or not an asset should be restituted and prepare a plan for the return. It would seem that Providence research needs to bring scholars from the source countries and those from the countries holding the collections. Co-researching would minimize biases in perspectives and support co-creation of meaning

As the articles in this Issue show, there is immense interest in African cultural heritage held in the global North. Public education, public interest litigation, research and continent-wide solidarities will become critical going forward, as articulated at the Restitution of Cultural Property and Heritage meeting held in Senegal - Nov 30- Dec 2, 2021.



Photo from Allan Donovan collection: Paul Ekhaba

Restitution of Mozambican Cultural Heritage: Image as Collective Memory

Marilio Wane

The ongoing process around the devolution of the famous Benin Bronzes¹ as demanded by Nigeria from the government of Germany is symbolic of the contemporary debate around the restitution of Africa's cultural heritage. Recently reawakened by the release of the 2018 report prepared by Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr and French historian Bénédicte Savoy which had been commissioned by the French government, the debate calls attention to the need for governments to discuss what to do with the large cultural heritage acquired in the context of colonial relations, marked by political domination and symbolic violence. We are, therefore, speaking of asymmetrical power relations that continue to produce high levels of structural inequalities reflected in the underdevelopment of the former colonies.

Meanwhile, the Sarr - Savoy Report adds a new impulse to an old debate on representation. In the wake of the so-called 'crisis of representations in the Social Sciences' that brought to the academic and political debate the need to 'decolonise' the institutions, there emerged a discourse on the production of knowledge and how to guarantee more equal social relations in general. For the specific case of the procedures of restitution of cultural goods, the immense particularities of the different colonial histories should be duly observed between the parties involved. Even in terms of procedures, there is not one pattern that can be applied to all countries. On the contrary, the methodologies and practices have to be adapted to the concrete cases in question. This aspect of the policies of cultural restitution demands substantial investment in research in the Social Sciences, precisely to identify such particularities and propose the most adequate procedures for their implementation.

The focus of restitution so far, has been on the devolution of material goods, as in the case of the Benin Bronzes. Meanwhile, and without prejudice to this modality, it is important to call attention to the immaterial dimension of this heritage, considering that the acts of cultural appropriation that took place in the colonial context were not limited to the acquisition of objects. Beyond the exploitation of the workforce and the political oppression, colonialism operated a systematic program of symbolic violence over the bodies and minds of the people under its dominion. In this way, the cultural practices of the populations were ideologically incorporated into the imperialist imaginary belonging to the regimes of domination imposed by the Europeans.

Chopi Timbila in the 1st Portuguese Colonial Exhibition (Porto, 1934)

This analysis reflects on the incidence of the debate around the restitution in the concrete case of the relations between Mozambique and Portugal. Following the general pattern of the European colonialism on the African continent, between the end of the 19th and during the 20th century, a wide range of cultural goods were systematically appropriated by the former metropole in various forms. In this sense, an important way of cultural

Beyond the exploitation of the workforce and the political oppression, colonialism operated a systematic program of symbolic violence over the bodies and minds of the people under its dominion

¹The recent decision by the German government, around May of 2021, to return this cultural treasure to Nigeria highlighted this issue, which was widely spread by international media.

appropriation characteristic of this historical context was the implementation of the famous colonial exhibitions. Created since the end of the 19th century, these were events organised by the imperialistic countries with the aim of showing their citizens the achievements of the colonial undertaking by the public exhibition of the cultural practices of the peoples under their dominion. Such exhibitions constituted actions of colonial propaganda insofar as they were conceived on the basis of the cultural supremacy of the West (white, christian, etc.), so as to legitimise the economic exploitation and the physical and symbolical violence underlying the nature of the political regime. It was to a great extent through these exhibitions that a whole set of symbolic representations were created in the collective imaginary of the European imperialistic countries, in relation to the peoples and lands under their domination.

Particularly, the interest for the theme of the exhibitions arose as part of graduate degree research about the Timbila² from the perspective of its related cultural policies. Timbila is an expression of music and dance practiced in Southern Mozambique and which recently was proclaimed by UNESCO as 'masterpiece of immaterial cultural patrimony of Humanity'. Among the various aspects raised during the research work, the historical and intense interaction between its practitioners and the instances of public power since the colonial time stands out. It is also due to this fact that Timbila is certainly the Mozambican cultural expression most documented and researched. It is an important part of the oldest existing documentation about the Timbila that gives account of its presence at the 1st Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, which occurred in Porto in 1934.

Effectively, 18 individuals of Chope origin, together with other groups of people from other regions of the then Mozambique colony, were selected and shipped for the participation in this event. Just like other hundreds of persons (around



*Peoples from Mozambique, the "marimba players", exposed in the 1st Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, (Porto, 1934).
Photo: Câmara Municipal do Porto/Arquivo Histórico. Cota F-P/CMP/13/59(9). Identificador 692698"*

300) were recruited from other territories under Portuguese dominion. Between June 16 and December 1, 1934, the inhabitants of the city of Porto and visitors could observe the persons from these faraway lands and also be observed in an artificially created scenery in which they staged what were supposed to be their 'authentic' cultural practices. This was also the case for the marimba players from Mozambique, as they were designated in the official documentation of the event. They raised quite some interest in the public because of their musicality, according to the press of the time.

inhabitants of the city of Porto and visitors could observe the persons from these faraway lands (and also be observed) in an artificially created scenery in which they staged which were supposed to be their 'authentic' cultural practices

After its implementation in 1934, this 1st Portuguese Colonial Exhibition was one of the last initiatives of this kind. It had already received criticism due to the infamous practice of 'human zoo'³, widely spread throughout Europe in the previous decades. They were often the 'main attractions' of the exhibitions, due to the exoticism created in the western imaginary in relation to a vast cultural complex that was widely unknown. And subordinate.

Apart from the precarious conditions to which they were exposed during the realisation of the event, these groups of people went through a process of 'objectification', which placed them in a position of inferiority on a hierarchic scale defined by the colonial look. In such a way that we can state assertively the enormous influence these exhibitions had on the construction, dissemination and legitimation of the systemic racism which stands at the basis of the colonial power relations and which endures intensely all over the world, until today. Despite the great relevance of these historical facts, we find an equally generalized ignorance around these events and their dimensions. There are certainly reasons which explain such disinformation and among them are doubtlessly the politics of silencing of the history, implemented to a greater or lesser degree in the different contexts. In this specific case, there is the ignorance in the two countries directly involved, each in its own way and for equally different ideological reasons. In Mozambique there was, since independence in 1975, an explicit effort by the regime of Frelimo⁴ to eradicate as much as possible from the collective memory the colonialist, symbolic representations that might jeopardise the process of constructing a new nation. On the Portuguese side and, presumably, in that of all colonial empires, it's about an inconvenient theme, often treated as a taboo, which reflects an ongoing enormous difficulty from the side of society to deal with its colonial past.

Photography: Restitution of image as collective memory

In this sense, the vast documentary collection that exists about events of this character also forms a set of patrimonial goods to be given back. And it is important that the process of "giving back" be ruled by the decolonisation of their meaning. It is about guaranteeing that the return of this patrimony be accompanied as much as possible by a *precise description and a deep analysis of the historical context* in which it was acquired. Just like, at the time, the presence of the Mozambicans at the Colonial Exhibition of Porto in 1934 was widely published by the press, documented by the responsible institutions and researched by the scholars, the presentation of this material in the present demands an equal accuracy in the way it is approached. Especially in what concerns the necessary exercise of deconstructing a whole system of symbolic representations that stands at the base of the systemic and institutionalised racism of the colonial cultural policies.

As we know, photography was one of the main instruments of colonial propaganda, even as a function of the context of its rise as an expression of the technological advancement of the industrial societies. In a way that, between

²Wane, Marílio. *Timbila Tathu: política cultural e a construção de identidades em Moçambique*. Maputo: Ed. Khuzula, 2019.

³Events organized by the old colonial metropolis, in which persons who were transported, housed and exposed for the observation of the western public. This practice, current in the first decades of the 20th century, was banned in the first half of the century due to its inhumanly degrading character.

other forms of application, it played the role of documenting the peoples and territories under colonial dominion and, thus, providing the representations that were going to feed the imagination of the imperialist nations about the 'Other'. That was precisely the case of the use of photography in the colonial exhibitions, in their various forms. Apart from the simple photographic register realised by the press of the time, the very production of the event included the publication of photo albums, postcards and even a photo competition, with pictures of the people that were brought from the colonial territories, who were literally exposed to the look of the visiting public. The earlier case of Saartje Baartman who had been nicknamed the Hottentot Venus stands testament to this, as does the repugnance of the human zoos mentioned here.

Invariably, those images are evidence of the violence to which the portrayed were systematically subjected. Whether the notorious discontent evident on their faces, or by the stereotypical and inferiorized way in which their 'uses and customs' were presented to the public, these exhibitions are part of the wide repertoire of dehumanizing indignity of colonialism, together with the massacres, the exploitation of work, and the political repression in general.

In this regard, the question of the hyper-sexualisation of the feminine body stands out, as in the case of a young woman from Guinea-Bissau nicknamed 'Rosita' by the press of the time. Among various possible analyses, this case also attracts attention because of the 'assimilationist' character of the Portuguese colonisation, operated by an effort to incorporate the cultural patrimony of the peoples under its dominion in a nationalistic and imperialistic ideology (in this case, by giving a Portuguese name to the young woman). Actually for many contemporary authors, the case of 'Rosita' synthesizes the various dimensions of the violences foisted in terms of race, gender, class and origin on the colonised populations. It is also emblematic of the silencing imposed on these persons, in so far as their voices are not taken into consideration in any phase of the process.

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The Gardens of the Crystal Palace, the place where the 1st Portuguese Colonial Exhibition took place in 1934. Since 1960, the old palace was demolished and replaced by a sports arena maintaining, however, the gardens as a public space.

Photo: Mariljo Wane

Contemporaneity and steps for the future

In this analysis, the idea is defended that this vast collection of documentation forms part of the Mozambican cultural heritage, and in this case, integrates achievements equally staged by people in Mozambique. Although in a hostile political context and serving an ideological purpose alien to their interests, men and women and even children left a mark of their cultural presence in the world. Under this perspective, and given the ignorance that surrounds the colonial exhibitions, public access to their vast documentary collection can be seen as a possible form of restitution of cultural heritage. In this case the 'returning' or 'restitution' may not only mean the physical transference of cultural goods from one country to another⁵, but their dissemination through photo exhibitions, archival documentation, academic debates among other platforms.

In any case, in another range of ideas, the global debate about the restitution of cultural heritage underlines the importance of academic research as a support base for institutional actions with this aim. Which, implicitly, presupposes an increase in technical collaboration between the countries in the scope of academic research and of institutions, such as archives, museums and libraries and authorities in the area of culture at the highest level. Still within this perspective, possible benefits are eminent for both sides of the equation, not only the African side. It is important to underline that the policies of restitution of patrimony constitute equally an important contribution to the contemporary societies of the former European metropolises, in the sense of a better understanding of their own history and the way their national identities have been constructed.

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⁴Frelimo – Front for the Liberation of Mozambique, the political movement that led the country to independence, in 1975, and has been in power since then as the hegemonic political party.

⁵Although the focus of this article is the immaterial dimension of the patrimony, it doesn't exclude the possibility of debate about the destiny of the objects that were taken by the people who participated in the exhibitions.

Returning the Vigango: Repatriation Within Postcolonial Spaces of Trade and Capitalism

Nancy Ngowa

Among the Mijikenda, as in most African communities, the rituals of life, from birth where there is a naming ceremony, to initiation, marriage and finally death, were governed by rules and regulations. Ceremonies and rituals of death were especially taken very seriously, as these transitioned a member of the community from physical life, into the afterlife. If not followed, it was believed that the deceased would haunt the living or cause misfortunes in the homestead.

From the use of the white linen called *sanza* (cloth for burying the dead), the *kubata mbira* (to start digging the grave), and laying a dead body on its right side in a sleeping position, feet pointing to the west and the top of the head to the east with eyes facing Shungwaya, the funeral rites of the Mijikenda have been significant and elaborate. Violation of these rituals causes the dead to come back in spirit form in the dreams and in symbolic ways to demand that these be performed in order for them to rest in peace.

In the conversations around repatriation of cultural objects, much of the debate is centred around the theft and looting of objects from the African continent by colonial overlords. Many of these objects were obtained from unfair and inhumane practices, including war and racial occupation. However, little is addressed from the lens of unfair trade practices and the violence of capitalism, mostly done under the guise of conservation and tourism, both words that have come to mimic the colonial enterprise of not only occupation and setting of apartheid systems, but also taking cultural artefacts from the continent to the West in the name of 'supporting local communities'. Africa continues to be a site where cultural artefacts are routinely taken out of their past and current cultural and social contexts, and taken to the West as souvenirs.

How do we as scholars and cultural experts frame this continual symbolic 'looting' of cultural objects? Does it stop being looting when a few coins are thrown at the so-called 'owners' of said cultural objects as a capitalistic exchange?

My paper seeks to problematize this through the example of the *vigango* of the Mijikenda.

The connection between the living and the dead - the *vigango* among the Mijikenda

The Mijikenda believed in a supreme being or God called Mulungu (Udvardy, 1992). Mulungu would not intervene directly into affairs of the community. The Mijikenda people did not pray directly to God but through ancestors who were believed to take their petitions to God. The living and the dead (ancestors) were connected by memorial posts called *vigango* to show the concept of unity in the family. These were used mostly by the Giriyama people. The Mijikenda family comprises the unborn, the living and the dead, all considered as active members of the family.

Mbiti (1969) explains that the living dead are part of their human families. They return to the families from time to time and share meals with them symbolically. When they appear, they inquire about family affairs and may even warn of impending danger. This shows that the dead continued to live among the living. The practice of naming children after the dead was to show continuity of the family and clan. According to Magesa (1998), the child given the name of an ancestor is expected to act according to the name, therefore making the dead present.

The *kigango* signifies the departed soul (*roho iriyouka*) that participates in all issues of the homestead and community in the spiritual form. In case of any decision making related to marriage, calamity or any other family matters, the *kigango* was first to be consulted. Parrinder (1968) stresses that the departed are not far away and were believed to be watching over their families. For instance, the *vigango* would be addressed by name as someone who was actually present. Even before eating or drinking palm wine, a Mijikenda would pour some little food or palm wine to the earth showing that they are sharing with the ancestors. Death was viewed as a transition from body to spirit, where the latter was more active and in control of issues in the community.

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Differences between a *kigango* and *koma*

The *vigango* were erected on the grave or in a small structure called *kigojo*, and indicated life after death. It is important to note that there is a difference between *koma* and *vigango*. Udvardy, Giles, and Mitsanze (2003) describe the *koma* as a short, uncarved peg of wood that represents the ordinary deceased in the Mijikenda community. They also describe a *kigango* as a carved hardwood and is abstractly human in shape with head and a long straight body which is decorated with elaborate chip carving. It ranges from 3-9 feet and is a memorial post for deceased members of the *Gohu* society. The *Gohu* was a high-ranking society among the Giriyama people because it dealt with all the moral issues of the community. It was this clan that made laws for the community and also managed all the religious practices and rituals. In short, the *Gohu* was the legislature and clergy of the Giriyama.

When a Mijikenda family was migrating, they were not supposed to carry the *vigango* with them because that was considered as 'disturbing the spirits.' The *kigango* of a migrating family would be left in the abandoned home (*ganzoni*) and instead, a piece of wood called *kibao* would be put in the new home (*chengoni*) to represent the *kigango*. Where *koma* was involved, a stick of a tree called *mkone* could be put in the *chengoni* to represent it.

Installation of a *kigango*

After a male member of the *Gohu* society is buried, the elders in the community take about one year before installing him a *kigango*. During the installation process, the elderly men gather and set for the forest to make a *kigango* for the deceased. While there, they select a hardwood tree and before cutting it, conduct a prayer session (*hasa*) addressing the tree by the name of the deceased and then pour on it palm wine (*uchi wa mnazi*), a mixture of water and maize flour (*vuva*) and tobacco (*kumbaku*). They then carve the *kigango* in the forest and bring it to the home in the early hours of the morning - around 5.00am.

When the elders come from the forest, they are supposed to be covered in white clothing. They go straight to the *kigojo* and install the *kigango*. Then they sacrifice a goat and a red rooster (*jogolo thune*) and the blood

is poured on the freshly dug soil around the *kigango*. They then conduct prayers for the installed *kigango*. The slaughtered goat and rooster are given to the wives for cooking as the *Gohu* only eat food that is cooked by their wives. The elders then enter a house prepared for them where they are served meat and palm wine. This meal marks the end of the *kigango* installation ceremony. For this occasion, the *vigango* were dressed in heavy cotton material constituting of three colours - blue, white and red. The blue colour signifies divinity, white for purity and the red represents blood which shows brevity in the community.

Significance of *Vigango*

The *vigango* signify the importance of the clergy in the traditional religion of the Mijikenda. As earlier mentioned, the *Gohu* were the clergy in the Giryama community and were the only ones for whom the *vigango* were erected. The *kigango* installed for a *Gohu* signified the respect he was given in the community.

Beside acting as mediator between God and the people, the *vigango* looked after the wellbeing and health of the community. Whenever there was a sickness, the ancestors would be consulted through the *vigango* then appropriate prayers and rituals conducted. If the spirits were appeased, the sickness in the community would disappear.

The *vigango* also gave warning to the society in case of calamities mostly by way of dreams. Members of the departed family would see the dead in dreams and have a conversation where the message would be conveyed directly and in a simple manner or in form of a metaphor or parable for analysis by the elders. For example, in case of impending drought and hunger, the *kigango* (ancestor) would come in a dream looking emaciated and carrying a bowl begging for food. This was a warning for the calamity ahead. The elders would intervene and pray to the ancestors to pass their petitions to *Mulungu* not to bring such a catastrophe upon them.

The prayer petitions would be accepted or rejected depending on the level of obedience and morality in the community. It was believed that most misfortunes faced were some forms of punishment from God for evil committed in the community. Where necessary, the spirits would be evoked through *vigango* and sacrifices conducted as a way of seeking forgiveness from God. When forgiveness was granted, the calamity ended and people continued living their normal lives.

It should be noted that the *vigango* needed to be handled with the respect they deserved and all rituals required to be performed to *vigango* were mandatory. For instance, while a family that migrates to a new home is not allowed to carry the *vigango* with them, the elders are expected to continually return to tend to them and perform required rituals. The *vigango* were also supposed to be handled with care. In case the *vigango* were mishandled, they would communicate in dreams. For example, if a *kigojo* roof was leaking such that the *vigango* were constantly rained on, one of the ancestors would come in a dream with clothes dripping with water and shivering in the cold. Such a dream was a call to roof the *kigojo* so that the *vigango* were not rained on.

The trade of the *vigango* abroad

Tourists from abroad started collecting the *vigango* as artefacts without caring about their religious and cultural significance. They used local people, especially the youth, to collect the *vigango* for them. The local youth, most of who are unemployed, saw this as a business opportunity and did not consider the religious and cultural implications of their actions. The big market was in Europe, Italy

Beside acting as mediator between God and the people, the vigango looked after the wellbeing and health of the community. Whenever there was a sickness, the ancestors would be consulted through the vigango then appropriate prayers and rituals conducted.

has not signed the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the means of prohibition and preventing illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. Kenya has also not signed the 1995 International Institute for the Unification of Private Law Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. This gap in legislation therefore led to the boom in international trade of vigango

and USA where *vigango* would be bought for high prices. For example, it is reported that an ordinary *kigango* would fetch between 1000 to 4000 USD. The *vigango* business also boomed with overall international business of artefacts in the 1980s when tourists would buy carvings and other artefacts to take back home for their private homes and some for business. Udvardy, Giles and Mitsanze (2003) explain that in 1980s and 1990s, the *vigango* were openly displayed and sold in hotels, galleries and tourist shops. There is also a large number of *vigango* in American Museums.

It is important to note that a Giriama household may move several times. In such a case, the *vigango* are often left in the abandoned homesteads where they can easily be stolen. However, it is important to note that even if the *kigango* is found in an abandoned homestead, the prohibition on disturbing it still remains. The Mijikenda believe that anyone who disturbs a *kigango* will be cursed by the ancestors, leading to misfortune for the offenders and community at large. This could be madness, illness, a family member getting lost, disagreement among family members, loss of harvest, drought, flooding, livestock loss, children being born with disabilities, or any other kind of calamity.

At the international level, stopping the trade of *vigango* has been a challenge because according to Udvardy, Giles, Mitsanze (2003), Kenya did not join United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) until recently and has not signed the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the means of prohibition and preventing illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property. Kenya has also not signed the 1995 International Institute for the Unification of Private Law Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. This gap in legislation therefore led to the boom in international trade of *vigango*.

According to Mzee Mwarandu, Mzee John Mitsanze and other elders, the Mijikenda are not happy about the *vigango* trade and view *vigango* thieves as social outcasts. They say that a *kigango* thief should pay the customary fine for murder because a *kigango* represents an ancestor. They insist that a stolen *kigango* should be brought back home to be reunited with their family so that the ancestor can stop being restless.

Efforts to bring back the vigango to their natural setting

The National Museum of Kenya has recently put a lot of effort in trying to stop the *vigango* trade. However, this has been quite difficult because as mentioned earlier, some of these *vigango* have been bought by individuals for their private collections.

Scholars and some individuals interested in preserving the culture of the Mijikenda people have put a lot of effort into repatriating the *vigango*. These include Monica Udvardy, Linda Giles, John Mitsanze, Mzee Mwarandu, Tsawe Munga Chidongo, just to mention a few. However, it has taken some struggle for their efforts to bear fruit as there have been challenges in the repatriation process.

One of the key players in the repatriation process is Stephen Nash, the Senior Curator of Archaeology in the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. The below is part of his experience:

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an African art dealer in Los Angeles who needed to jazz up his business; he needed something new to jazz up his

sales. His sales were not working out well, there was inflation. He learnt about *vigango* of the Mijikenda and he and others started paying people to cut down the *vigango*... They took these *vigango* to Nairobi and other big cities and ultimately they made it to the international art market and ended up in Los Angeles. Some of the people who bought these *vigango* ... were big time Hollywood actors. They took possession of them and sometimes donated them to museums and also universities in order to get their taxes waived. The Denver Museum accepted the donation of 30 *vigangos* in the 1990s from a music producer. Between 2006 and 2008, the Denver Museum set up to do a complete inventory of its art collection and also ensure their collections were ethical. They decided to repatriate the 30 *vigangos* back to Kenya. Initial efforts to reach out to universities and museums in Kenya were unproductive. Through the sister city relationship between Nairobi and Denver, the Denver Museum pledged to repatriate the *vigango* back to the National Museums of Kenya. They were shipped to the airport but the Kenya Revenue Authority wanted to charge the Denver Museum import tax of 40,000 dollars. They therefore decided not to send the *vigango*, and they sat at the Denver airport warehouse for 3 years. Another institution in California sent theirs back at roughly the same time and they sat at the airport in Nairobi awaiting tax payment and eventually nobody knows where they are.

Stephen Nash narrates that in 2018, he had an opportunity to meet Dr. Purity Kiura who worked at the National Museums of Kenya, in Los Angeles who worked at the National Museums of Kenya. It is Dr. Kiura who finally got a letter from the Kenya Revenue Authority saying that they would waive the import tax from the *vigango*. The *vigango* finally landed in Kenya in 2018 where they were received at a press conference. However, when he came to Kenya and visited Fort Jesus in Mombasa, he found *vigango* lying in the museum in Mombasa.

From the above, it is clear that there have been efforts to repatriate the *vigango* into their rightful places. However, these and similar efforts call for commitment by government bodies, museums abroad, the National Museums in Kenya and all other stakeholders including the local communities.

Conclusion

The Mijikenda elders strongly believe that the *vigango* should not be left in museums or in any foreign surroundings because they do not belong there. They insist that effort should be made to return all the *vigango* to their rightful owners and contexts. They add that the *vigango* in foreign places will continue to be restless until they are brought back to their native homes. It is therefore the plea of the Mijikenda elders that the *vigango* be removed from the museums, airports and any other foreign locations where they are held, and returned to their owners. The Mijikenda elders need to be involved in the process so that proper procedures can be followed in the re-institution of the *vigango*. They also warn that without reuniting the *vigango* to their families, the Mijikenda will continue experiencing calamities because their ancestral spirits are restless.

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Karambu Ole Senteu and His Spear: Reclaiming the (His)Story of Maa Colonial Resistance

Nampaiyo Koriata

When Karambu Ole Senteu was informed that his prized bull had been taken in his absence, he roused himself from where he and his age-group, fellow Olmurrani, were eating meat in Loita, and went to retrieve the animal. He was incensed, because the man that had taken his bull was well known to him. District Commissioner Hugh Grant had been posted as Narok DC in 1946, arriving to find that a tax-collection arrangement where the colonial government took cattle from the Maa for the war effort had fostered nothing but bitterness and anger.

Earlier⁶ in 1939, the Defence Regulations had given the Kenya Supply Board power to acquire livestock to make tinned beef for the allied forces fighting in the Second World War. A quota of 2,000 cattle per month had been imposed on the Maa. By 1946 after the war was over, the quotas remained in place, and settler farmers got far better treatment and compensation than the Maa. The Maa of Morijo in the Loita Hills felt the pinch a little more than other Maa because majority of the quota imposed on the Maa came from Loita.⁷

Karambu Ole Senteu was the grandson of the Great Oloibon Mbatian, and son of Senteu, Mbatian's second son. An Olmurrani, Karambu was yet to take a wife and have children. However, he had already made his mark as an Olmurrani, known as one of the most skilled shooters of the spear. He had a reputation on the battlefield and on the hunting ground, having killed a number of lions in the age-old Olmurrani lion hunt. Karambu was loved and revered in the community. In his younger days, he had acquired a young calf whose mother had died, and had cared for it like it was his child. He named the calf, Lemelelu. Under his loving care, Lemelelu grew into a prized bull, all black, with a white tail. Karambu loved this bull. Moreover, he was from the lineage of the Oloibon, great spiritual leader of the Maa community who believed that Enkai, the great God, had sent them down from heaven laden with cattle. To have this prized bull taken, and in his absence, was an affront that Karambu felt deep in his being.

Karambu Ole Senteu grew up during tumultuous colonial times. When the white occupiers invaded the continent, it was with a superiority that saw the Black African as a lesser human, only worthy of being civilized and humanized. Such a superiority complex would find itself at odds with the leaders that already ruled over African people. To Karambu and the Maa community, whiteness came with a contempt that was hard to take, thus the stage was set for what would become a battle between white supremacy, and Maa pride in themselves and their way of life. This would be more poignant for the case of Karambu, whose grandfather was Mbatian, great Oloiboni of the Maa people, and whose name is now cemented on the highest peak of Mount Kenya. Oloiboni Mbatian had two sons, Lenana, and Senteu. In turn, Senteu had three sons: Kapolonto was the first, Karambu the second, and Kilianga the third. From his youth, Karambu stood out as what his the family still call "sharp shooter", showing his prowess with the spear.

As an Olmurrani, Karambu obtained a spear of his own from a blacksmith or *orkunono*

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You can imagine, we know where DC Grant was buried in Loita, but we do not know where our uncle and brother is. We do not know if he was hanged, taken to jail somewhere, or if he was flown out of the country to be tortured by the white man

Taking objects from people without their permission, especially objects of cultural and personal significance (bodies, spears and artefacts of war, jewelry, clothing, etc.) implied that they would be used to place curses on their owners. Communities are now asking why the white man took their objects, some even as private as under-garments? What curses or spells were cast using these stolen objects and items?

in an area of Loita called Leshuta. It was called *empere naibor*, meaning the white spear, on account of its sharpened metallic upper part that gleamed white in the sun. When he was informed that DC Grant had taken Lemelelu, he left with his shield and spear, which every Olmurrani carried with them everywhere, and went to retrieve his animal. It must be underlined that his intention was not to kill the DC as has been alleged. It was standard fare for any young Olmurrani to carry his spear with him, especially in those days when the lands were covered with buffalo, lion and other wild animals, and where the only accessible form of transportation for many was walking.

DC Grant, armed and twirling his gun on his finger, refused to hand over the animal that he had taken in Karambu's absence. Even where the Olmurrani promised to replace Lemelelu with other bulls, the DC was adamant, even angered by the demand to return the animal. It is reported that Grant repeatedly answered 'Hapana, hapana! (No, no!) to Karambu's pleas to return the beloved bull. At this point, Karambu, in frustration, unleashed his spear at Grant's chest with so much force that the *empere naibor* pierced the DC and went through his body, killing him on the spot.

After a trial in which Karambu's brothers allegedly testified against him, he was sentenced to death by hanging. He was taken away, as was his spear. To date, his family do not know where or how he was hang, or where he was buried. Nampaiyo muses:

'You can imagine, we know where DC Grant was buried in Loita, but we do not know where our uncle and brother is. We do not know if he was hanged, taken to jail somewhere, or if he was flown out of the country to be tortured by the white man. We never saw his body, we do not know where he is, or if he's even alive.'

His spear was also taken, and is rumored to be in a German museum. The family of Karambu Ole Senteu have been demanding for the return of this spear and their claim encompasses diverse connotations.

Reclaiming Karambu ole Senteu

The story of Karambu ole Senteu has been written in various places, mostly by white researchers and writers, and as Nampaiyo reiterates, has been peppered with prevarications and outright lies. The colonial enterprise is made to appear fatherly, and DC Grant has been painted as a 'dedicated civil servant who was just conducting his job' and was murdered by a 'savage Maasai Olmurrani with an unnatural affection' for an animal. The depths of Maa culture, the savagery of the colonial enterprise, and the brutality of its officials, including DC Grant, are all glossed over and literally white-washed.

As Nampaiyo expounds, the worst part is that the story of resistance to colonial rule has become one-sided. Karambu's act of resistance to colonial rule is erased, and is virtually unknown in the Kenyan collective psyche. This, therefore, becomes the first point of importance in reclaiming Karambu Ole Senteu – that the histories of resistance to colonialism that have been erased need to be brought back into common knowledge, far beyond the narrow classifications of the Mau Mau resistance as a Kikuyu-only movement.

Second is questioning the *whys* of taking objects, and the cultural significance of this taking. For instance, Nampaiyo explains that in Maa culture, taking someone's things was an ill omen. Taking objects from people without their permission, especially objects of cultural and personal significance (bodies, spears and artefacts of war, jewelry, clothing, etc.) implied that they would

be used to place curses on their owners. Communities are now asking why the white man took their objects, some even as private as under-garments? What curses or spells were cast using these stolen objects and items? Further, this was a form of 'othering' in Maa culture, where a lower or defeated enemy had their objects looted as a sign of conquest. Reclaiming these objects therefore, has a deep cultural significance that cannot be overemphasized.

Third, Nampaiyo believes that the taking of these objects during the colonial era set a precedent to loot future objects of value, including precious stones such as gold, diamonds, and other items currently being looted out of the continent. Therefore, reclaiming these objects becomes a symbolic resistance to this precedent, one that can be used to demand proper compensation for the present day plundering of the continent. This extends into a conversation around the blood diamonds for example, among other items of value being looted from various countries in Africa in the current age.

Fourth, Nampaiyo points out the consequences of looting of these cultural objects, and the spiritual gaps that now exist in communities as a result. The people of Loita have, for instance, witnessed many incidents of spear killings, murders, and freak accidents from the time of Karambu's presumed killing on January 28th, 1947 to date. The elders of Loita believe that Karambu's spirit is not at peace, especially given the false narratives that keep painting him as an unhinged Maasai man who out of unreasonable rage, killed a man over nothing but a mere bull. To appease him, the elders would like the spear returned so that they can use it as a point of contact to conduct cleansing ceremonies including one to atone for the spilling of DC Grant's blood. This is important to note – the Maa recognize that blood was spilled, which is itself an act of violence – but also laud Karambu's act of resistance to a violent and oppressive colonial enterprise that interrupted their way of life and their peace.

Fifth, and in a general sense, Nampaiyo questions why these objects were taken from African soil to go and make money for white audiences in European and American museums. These large sums of money are never returned to the owners of the objects. She insists that these objects must be returned to their owners.

Finally, Nampaiyo and her family think that the return of these objects could be the first step towards decolonizing our own local museums. For instance, she would love to see Karambu's spear and shield at the National Museums of Kenya, where, his story, which is largely unknown, would become national knowledge. Further, the return of other looted items, she believes, would elevate women, whose significant role in the resistance to colonialism is largely erased. To Nampaiyo, reclaiming these looted objects and their backstories, helps to build a better understanding of pre-colonial and colonial Africa including the integral roles women held in society, and which were erased by the colonial enterprise. The idea that women in Maa society were also Oloibons and wielded so much power, was anathema in the European mind and so they sought to cull this power from birth by burying their stories

Alongside this, Nampaiyo decries the idea that even while these objects sit in European museums, there are errors in their names, use and accompanying stories, thereby obscuring and distorting the very essence of African life in the pre-colonial era. Reclaiming the objects therefore becomes an act of reclaiming that very essence of the cultural lives of African people(s).

Conclusion

While this is a story about the lost spear of Karambu ole Senteu, and how that spear represents the lost story of Maa resistance to colonial rule, it is also a much-needed examination of the complexities of the demands for the return of looted objects to their rightful communities. Because these lost stories also speak to who we are as a people. They speak to broken cultural norms and the consequences of these breaches. This story becomes a compelling case for restitution as restoration of cultural order and communal well-being, including an acknowledgement of the place of power that women occupied in many communities, and how that power was a restorative one. As Nampaiyo concludes, bringing back Karambu and his spear is bringing back our lost stories, removing the darkness from our histories, and restoring lost identities.

Nampaiyo Koriata is a great-grandchild of the Oloibon Mbatian, a grandniece of his son Senteu, and niece of Karambu ole Senteu. She is the Founder of Fistula Trust, an organization that fights for Maa women and girls who have fistula from early pregnancies, or injuries from FGM.

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'What are you Doing With My Grandfather's Skull? A Conversation with Isaria Anaeli Meli bin Mandara

Valence Valerian Meriki Silayo

Introduction

Isaria Anaeli Meli bin Mandara aged 89 is a grandson of Mangi Meli Rindi Kiusa bin Mandara of Old Moshi. He has, for a very long time, championed the return of his grandfather's skull from the Germans. Mangi Meli Rindi Kiusa bin Mandara, who ruled Moshi from 1891-1900 was the son of Mangi Rindi Kiusa Mandara, who ruled Moshi before him from 1860-1891. Mangi Meli Mandara is one of the bravest Mangi in the history of the Chagga, who, like his father, did not know fear even in the face of death (Silayo, 2016). Alongside his fearlessness, he was also a Mangi with great enthusiasm and power from a very young age. He showed greater war capability against the Germans, second only to Mangi Sina of Kibosho. Mangi Meli was hanged in 1900, together with nineteen other leaders from Kilimanjaro, Arusha and Maasai. He was beheaded and his skull taken to Germany. Since the 1960s, Isaria Meli has been advocating for its return. In this story, Isaria will take us through the process and politics of restitution in Tanzania.

The struggle

Mangi Meli was one of the most powerful leaders of the Chagga community of Old Moshi, Kilimanjaro Region, in the late 1800s. He had been chief for only nine years before his execution by the German colonialists on March 2, 1900, in Old Moshi. He was then beheaded and his head sent to Germany. In early 1900, rumours surfaced that Mangi Meli was conspiring with other Chagga, Maasai and Meru leaders to bring the biggest war to the Germans and expel them from Kilimanjaro once and for all. Before that plan materialised, he was captured, jailed and after a trial was found guilty and convicted of rebellion (Silayo, 2016, 2017). He was hanged together with 19 other leaders at a public execution as his family and people watched. Following his death, on March 2, 1900, the German colonial administration beheaded him and took his head to Germany. This took place on a tree outside the German *boma* on top of a deep ravine to Msangachi river opposite his residence in Old Moshi, Tsudunyi village. Meli like his father Mangi Rindi was one of the war heroes of the Chagga and they all detested and fought against German colonialism (Silayo, 2016).

Mangi Meli's second wife, Masinde was holding her son Anaeli, and both witnessed the hanging of Mangi Meli. After the execution, Masinde fled in fear of her life to Uru a neighbouring chiefdom and hid. Later on, she returned to Old Moshi and in 1932 her grandson was born and named Isaria. As was Chagga custom and as her duty of care, Masinde told her grandson all about his grandfather. It was at this very uncomfortable moment that Isaria learnt about the brutality of the Germans and the torture, killing and beheading of his grandfather. This story created a permanent scar on Isaria's life, tormenting and traumatising him. To this day, Isaria can still hear his grandmother narrating the torture his grandfather underwent.

'I cannot have a good and peaceful sleep, I keep dreaming about my grandfather and my grandmother keeps coming to me in my dreams narrating the same story now and then...' He says. He has vowed to avenge his grandfather's brutal murder, and look for justice and a proper burial for his grandfather.

Isaria Anael Meli bin Mandara, has been campaigning and appealing to the Tanzanian and German governments to assist in the search and return of the skull of Mangi Meli

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for over fifty years. Isaria believes that one day his efforts will bear fruit and his grandmother's spirit will rest in peace.

'We have started to see some light; we only need a little push.... maybe from the government and individuals like you...' he says. 'Twice, I have been asked by the Germans to provide samples for DNA so that it can assist in the search and prove that I am related to Mangi Meli. Recently we have managed to restore and display the history of Mangi Meli in a digital form by preparing a short film'.

'I was shown six skulls with the inscription Dschagga/Wadschagga and they told me that the skulls date back to the time of Mangi Meli. Current Tanzania's ambassador to Germany Dr Abdallah Possi promised to follow up the result but I have not heard from him since'.

This film was produced in collaboration with Berlin Post-Colonial, an NGO that advocates for the return of African cultural objects and funded by the Goethe-Institut Tanzania, the Berlin Senate Department of Culture and Between Bridges (non-profit exhibition space organised by Wolfgang Tillmans). The installation and the film showing to the people of Old Moshi brought a sense of relief and conviction that the remains of their ancestors would soon be returned with compensation.

"I was interviewed during the preparation of this film and invited to the exhibition in Berlin" says Isaria Meli.

While in Germany for this film, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation requested him to take another DNA test. Currently, the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation holds over 5,000 skulls from German colonial subjects of which 200 are said to come from Tanzania. While at PCHF, argues Isarial Meli,

'I was shown six skulls with the inscription *Dschagga/Wadschagga* and they told me that the skulls date back to the time of Mangi Meli. Current Tanzania's ambassador to Germany Dr Abdallah Possi promised to follow up the result but I have not heard from him since'.



Mr Isaria Meli 89, sitting on Mangi Meli's memorial tower with Oblique under the tree that was used to hang Mangi Meli on March 2, 1900.

In 2005, reporter Adam Ihucha⁸ reported that in Old Moshi, Mangi Meli's clan community had requested president Benjamin Mkapa former president of Tanzania to intervene and help them recover the remains of their ancestors. The residents appealed to the then-president to publicly hand over the responsibility of bringing the skull back home before he left State House.

Isaria Anael Meli has many times attempted to see to the repatriation of the skull since 1968 but his efforts have not borne any fruit. He says he has held talks with different individuals and groups in a bid to negotiate the return of Meli's skull since. He has even sent a request to the Moshi local government and the German Embassy in Dar es Salaam. He remembers a response from the former German ambassador, Dr Enno Barker, saying his government could not locate the said skull. Isaria was not satisfied with the ambassador's response, believing that the skull of Mangi is lying somewhere in (one of) their (Germany) museums and should be returned.⁹

Aluta continua

The film on the history and life of Mangi Meli ends with the narrator (Grandfather) asking his audience (Child) if he should give up the search for the skull.

'No grandpa, the search has to go on,' the child replies.

The mass repatriation of indigenous art and objects around the world would mean an all-encompassing recalibration of the African culture. For any African community and nation, the return of a single piece of their cultural remains means a moment of sombre celebration. However, pertinent questions remain – where was/were these objects kept for all this long? How were they stored? Some of the objects may have been displayed on a mantle and used as a source of endless fascination, even mirth. Some have changed hands through both formal and black-market auctions, ending up in private collections, or in museums in Europe and North America, displayed to a largely white and problematic gaze. The lack of cultural context they have been subjected to all these decades is a question that needs pondering. The contentions and reluctance to return these objects is also a question that needs pondering. Germany for example is holding thousands of Tanzania's cultural objects and remains, among those the remains of Mangi Meli.

Isaria Meli is not the only Chagga concerned about the remains of not only Mangi Meli's but the restitution of all African remains. He is joined by Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, a German-based Tanzanian activist, researcher and founder of the restitution-focused organization

Isaria Anael Meli has many times attempted to see to the repatriation of the skull since 1968 but his efforts have not borne any fruit.





The tree used to hang Mangi Meli

'Berlin Postcolonial'. Mr Mboro has been looking for Meli's remains for over forty years.

Like Isaria Meli, Mboro learned about Mangi Meli from his grandmother. In 1978 Mboro secured a scholarship to Germany and he promised his grandmother that he would bring back the venerated Mangi. It is the story of Mangi Meli as shared by his grandmother in the middle of the banana groves of Kilimanjaro that kept Mboro going with the continuous search.

'She would always tell me stories, but they weren't stories, they were actual history, and with Mangi Meli she was so proud that it took him seven hours to die once hung, while the others died very quickly.' He said in an interview with the BBC, 'When she was telling me this as a small child I was so shocked that it would take someone that long to die, but when I grew up I realised that the Germans made a specific knot so they could torture him for a long time, and show the people that if you dare to do anything against the Germans this is what is going to happen to you.'¹⁰

Speaking with Isaria Meli and reading about Mnyaka Mboro, it is very clear that their determination and the need to find and return their leader's remains has never wavered even after decades of search. This is largely because they feel a strong attachment to their community which believes that most of the natural catastrophes, hunger, lack of rain and other ailments might be caused by the improper handling of Meli's and other ancestors' remains.

A conversation must be held with appropriate community owners of such cultural objects and remains to further understand cultural interpretations of these objects and remains. This is because there is an inherent misunderstanding of what these objects mean to different communities, in that they are not all considered museum-appropriate. For example, those objects meant for display,



such as ethnographic and arts should be treated as objects for display, and displayed with appropriate information. However, body remains must be treated with the highest respect as per individual community norms and culture, such as proper and befitting burials.

Why should the remains be returned? This was a question posed by former Tanzania's Foreign Minister Augustine Mahiga during an interview with BBC in 2018. He told the BBC that the Tanzania government wants to come to the restitution negotiation table but wants to widen the discussion, to go beyond "justice". In the same interview, Abdallah Saleh Possi, Tanzania's ambassador to Germany, told the BBC that it was time the conversation involved talks about human dignity, and specifically in this case, the dignity of Tanzanians, especially when handling their bodies in name of research.

This means that in restitution we need to talk about restoring the community's dignity first and then bring on board issues of justices – justice for the executions and the forceful removal and transportation of human remains without consent. This will answer the question of why these remains must be returned, for whom, and accorded a proper burial. Therefore, cooperation with the Diaspora and NGOs like *Berlin Postcolonial*, *African Foundation for Development* in Britain must be part of the quest for cultural repatriation to be successful.

Acknowledgement

The author of this short story on restitution in Africa would like to thank the Chagga elders as well as the ancestors of Old Moshi for challenging us to think about cultural restitution differently and at the same time share their trauma and grievances. The author thanks in particular Mr Isaria Anaeli Meli for sharing his wisdom and allowing it to go public.

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⁸The Guardian News Paper reporter.

⁹Isaria Meli interview with the Guardian News Paper in 2005.

¹⁰The search in Germany for the lost skull of Tanzania's Mangi Meli - BBC News

in restitution we need to talk about restoring the community's dignity first and then bring on board issues of justices – justice for the executions and the forceful removal and transportation of human remains without consent

Zambia's Fight for the Broken Hill Man Skull: Repatriating Identities, Histories and Sciences

Benedict Tembo

Miyanda Machila, a Zambian educator, has been teaching history for 11 years. He teaches juniors and seniors in Grades 8 to 12. One of the topics he addresses is the skull of the iconic Broken Hill Man (Kabwe 1) which was discovered in Kabwe, Central Zambia in 1921.

The skull, considered one of the best-preserved hominin fossils found in Africa, was dated to 324,000 – 274,000 years ago. Arthur Smith Woodward, an English palaeontologist, named the skull *Homo Rhodesiensis*, a Middle Stone Age fossil.

Machila argues that it is difficult to teach history to children when there is no tangible historical evidence. He wonders how Africa can provide proof of its history if it cannot show the related artefacts as evidence. He is appealing to Zambian authorities to make the remains of Broken Hill Man available to Zambian learners and the general populace, to prove that such beings really existed and lived within their vicinity.

He is concerned that the British have remained adamant and mute over this issue even as they insist that 'Zambia has no capacity to look after the remains of this country's oldest man.' Further, the Broken Hill Man's stay continues to be a financially lucrative opportunity for the British museum thereby denying the same opportunity to Zambia.

He says the repatriation of the Broken Hill Man remains to Zambia will be a source of national pride. He cites a Fig tree in Kabwe which was a key site associated with trading, and is now one of the symbols on the national currency. The Fig Tree site, declared a national monument by the National Conservation Commission, was an assembly area for donkeys and caravans en-route to the north and north-east while Broken Hill was a railhead for most of North-Western Rhodesia during the colonial period. Machila notes that the Fig Tree is now a practical teaching aid as pupils are able to see it. He also points to the copper crosses that were used for barter system at Ing'ombe Ilede, an archaeological site located on a hill near the confluence of the Zambezi and Lusitu rivers in the Southern Province of Zambia. The crosses are currently used as symbols on the Zanaco bank badge. He wonders again why Broken Hill skull is not officially recognised as part of national heritage.

The contestations around the Broken Hill Man have been brewing in Zambia for some time now and apart from Machila, many artists are equally concerned by the delayed repatriation of this artefact. In 2019, Roy Kausa, an artist and activist, formed a pressure group on social media to advocate for the return of the Broken Hill Man. He is concerned that the British have remained adamant and mute over this issue even as they insist that 'Zambia has no capacity to look after the remains of this country's oldest man.' Further, the Broken Hill Man's stay continues to be a financially lucrative opportunity for the British museum thereby denying the same opportunity to Zambia.

Kausa believes that as soon as the British Museum and government agree to return this piece of heritage, the government would seek funds to set up the infrastructure necessary to house Zambia's oldest ancestor. He considers that there are many friendly countries in Africa and the rest of the world willing to help Zambia with modern storage facilities to keep the ancient fossil in the country. In addition, there might be many well-wishers in Zambia ready to finance the repatriation of the Broken Hill Man.

The Zambian government has not been sitting on its laurels in the pursuit of the Broken Hill Man but has been engaging the British government on the matter. The National Museums Board, which falls under the Ministry of Tourism and Arts together with heritage experts and custodians, say negotiations between parties are in progress.

According to Bevine Sangulube, the acting Director General of the National Museums Board, the Broken Hill Skull was initially taken to Britain for further research, and is with the Natural History Museum. She states that the Board is ready to receive the remains and the Livingstone Museum has the capacity to handle storage and other related needs. Apart from the government, the Zambia National Commission for UNESCO is also involved in the restitution process of the Broken Hill Man.

With regard to broader restitution efforts, Charles Ndakala, the Zambia National Commission for UNESCO Secretary General, confirms that apart from the Broken Hill Man, there are no records nor information on other cultural heritage issues [that] UNESCO Zambia is attempting to restore.

Benedict Tembo is a journalist and the Editorials Editor at the Zambia Daily Mail.



German Colonialism and Trading in African Skulls: The Case of Chief Hassan Omar Makunganya of Kilwa, Tanzania

Nancy Rushohora

Introduction

Never in the history of Africa has humankind been tried as during imperialism. The process of colonisation naturally escalated to violence, immorality, and discrimination that saw European and Asian countries rob African communities of, not only their culture and dignity, but also land and other natural resources. For more than a century, between 1860 and 1961, Tanzania was oppressed under colonial hegemony in four different phases. The first phase is the period between 1840 and 1890, which is characterized by the expansion of slave trade, Arabs dominion of the coast, and arrival of the Germans (Nimtz, 1980). From 1890 to 1917 Tanzania was under German control and the period was characterized by the brutal establishment of colonial rule, wars, and major transformations in the economies of the country (Becker, 2004). Under British colonialists in the period 1917–1945, there was expansion of European settler farming (Gewald, 2008), while the last phase, from 1945 to 1961, saw this colonial control challenged by a rising nationalism movement with demands for freedom (Ilfie, 1979).

*Karl Peters, the founder of the German East Africa (Tanzania) colony, was nicknamed *mkono wa damu* which is Kiswahili for 'bloodstained hands'. Engelhardt, the District Commissioner of Ruvuma received the nickname *Bwana Hundu*, literary meaning Master Leech because he was said to suck all the blood from the Wangoni to make them weak*

African resistance to German cruelty

It is possible that the greatest resistance to colonialism occurred under the Germans who used cruelty to destroy the power of the chiefs and their subordinates. Even German officials visiting the colonies for the first time were surprised by the level of cruelty. The colonial administrators, however, argued that 'opening up a black continent to civilization was impossible in Africa without cruelty' (Gwassa, 2005). Due to the German's cruelty, various nicknames were lent to them. For instance, Karl Peters, the founder of the German East Africa (Tanzania) colony, was nicknamed *mkono wa damu* which is Kiswahili for 'bloodstained hands'. Engelhardt, the District Commissioner of Ruvuma received the nickname *Bwana Hundu*, literary meaning Master Leech because he was said to suck all the blood from the Wangoni to make them weak.

During their colonial rule, Germans encountered more than fifty resistances between 1889 and 1896 (Coulson, 2013). The earliest major resistance occurred in the coastal region in three different chiefdoms - Abushiri Salim led the first one, Bwana Heri the second and Hassan Omari Makunganya the third. The latter is the main focus of this article. The coastal resistances that were led by Abushiri Salim and Bwana Heri occurred almost spontaneously in August and September 1888 (Kimambo & Temu, 1969). Thus, the Germans recognized the coastal resistance as Abushiri War or "*Araberaufstand*" meaning the "Arab Revolt" (Pike, 1986:204). The outbreak of the Abushiri and Bwana Heri coastal resistance resulted in the arrival of the Germans on the coast for purposes of establishing their authority and their occupation threatened the existence of Abushiri and Bwana Heri's chiefdoms.

Abushiri was an Arab descendant and plantation owner while Heri was of the Zigua ethnic group who collected tolls from the caravans that passed through the town of Muheza in the hinterland of Tanga (Coulson, 2013). Hassan Omari Makunganya led the Kilwa resistance in 1894, almost at the end of the Abushiri war. This made it look like the continuation of the same resistance which now covered almost the whole coast of Mainland Tanzania. All the coastal peoples participated in the resistance, not necessarily to ensure the prosperity of an individual chiefdom, but in order to retain independence in the face of foreign intervention (Kimambo & Temu, 1969). The main tactics of the war for the local people was guerilla - hiding in thick bush and firing while the Germans used scorched-earth policy, destroying crops, confiscating cattle, burning crop stores and villages (Coulson, 2013).

Resistances Aftermath

Countless Tanzanians who were deemed guilty of resistance to the imposition of colonial rule between 1890 and 1912, were either killed without due process or handed over to the executioner following conviction by court-martial. In 1905, for example, the Dar-es-Salaam administrative headquarters, constructed in the 1860s, was converted into a jail holding 200 Abushiri resistance prisoners. In 1911, government chiefs imprisoned the village headmen in Ugogo who were accused of refusing to send their people to the Christian Sunday Service. Prohibition to take Holy Communion and being forced to sit at the back of the church, formed part of the Christian punishments applied by the German missionaries. Corporal punishment, particularly whipping or *kiboko* (emanating from the Germans use of skin from the hippo which is known as *kiboko* in Kiswahili), execution and incarceration went hand in hand as instruments of the colonial state. These punishments were aimed at the body and the mind and contributed to the destruction of the jurisdiction, culture, identity, and dignity of local communities.

The fate of the three chiefs of the coastal resistances is shrouded in mystery. While there is no evidence that Heri was either arrested or hanged, Abushiri's arrest and execution is sometimes located by oral tradition as far as Tabora in central Tanzania, where he presumably sought refuge shortly before his arrest. Historians such as Kimambo and Temu (1969) have it that Abushiri was arrested and hanged in Bagamoyo on December 15, 1889 and Makunganya was arrested and hanged in Kivinje on November 15, 1895. Up until the writing of this article, both oral and historical accounts of Makunganya stop immediately after his execution. Nevertheless, a number of factors render the continuation of Makunganya's history relevant. First, is the inscription of his name on an emancipation memorial constructed in the 1970s to commemorate the Maji Maji War heroes and heroines of Kilwa. These people were executed by the Germans almost 10 years after the demise of Makunganya. Second, there is a story beyond Makunganya's execution which tells that his remains were removed from Tanzania to Germany and were later traded to America. The scale of trade between the Germans and American museums and the degree to which they benefited and continue to benefit from colonial plunder, contributes to our understanding of colonial powers in the past, and how it continues to perpetuate itself. Lastly, the disappearance of Makunganya's memory among his descendants in both Kilwa and Lindi is attributed to the consequences of this plunder.

Trading the skull of Makunganya

Colonial records have it that after the execution of Makunganya on a mango tree famously known as *Mwembe Kinyonga* (literary meaning the execution mango tree or gallows) in Kilwa Kivinje, his remains were never buried but transported to Germany for racial studies. After the execution on November 26, 1895 a military doctor examined Makunganya's body and his skull was then sent to Berlin to Felix von Luschan who was the head of the Africa section at the *Völkerkundemuseum* (Ethnological Museum). Von Luschan held two different collections of human remains - the official collection of the museum called "S-Sammlung" (S-collection, S stands for *Schädel* meaning the skull), which is still in Berlin, and the second is his private collection called *Lehrsammlung* (teaching collection). After von Luschan's death, his private collection was sold to New York and is held by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) as the 'Luschan collection'. Makunganya's skull was part of the private collection. It was given the number 4728 and it is still held by the AMNH. This writer's email correspondence with the museum proves the availability of the remains and willingness of the museum (AMNH) to hand them over to the people of Kilwa.

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Back home, the name Makunganya is fading from historical records owing to the appropriation of the past. The inclusion of Chief Makunganya's name on the emancipation monument is contested not only because it is misplaced, but has been used to cover up the trading of the skull of this supreme chief which is here argued as dehumanization and shaming of the African body. The construction of the monument was a result of the political movement of Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) in its attempt to commemorate the victims of German colonialism during the Maji Maji War. As such, the inclusion of Chief Makunganya contradicts the available records of the coastal resistances and the Maji Maji War.



The Maji Maji Memorial Monument in Kilwa with the name of Chief Hassan Omar Makunganya

Tracing Makunganya's residence, relatives and other archaeological remains was not as easy as one could imagine, given that he was a great chief in Tanzania. Lindi, the headquarters of the region where Kilwa is located, had no records of where exactly Makunganya was from. In Kilwa Kivinje where he resisted most and traded in slaves and ivory, it was claimed that Makunganya was a Myao. The Yao are found inland of the southern coast of Tanzania districts of Masasi and Tunduru where Chief Mchemba presided. Very few people today, including his maternal uncle, attest to Mchemba as Mmvera who traces his origin in Lindi around the Mavuji area. It is in this area that his chieftom was established well enough to control slaves and the ivory trade as far as Kilwa. This confusion I argue, results from the lack of buried and remembered remains of the African chiefs. The repercussion of this absence to the community is immense and robs the Tanzania community of their culture, identity, and history.

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The Displacement of NOK Art and Its Implications on Nigerian Heritage

Benmun Damul and Deborah Gideon Kassam

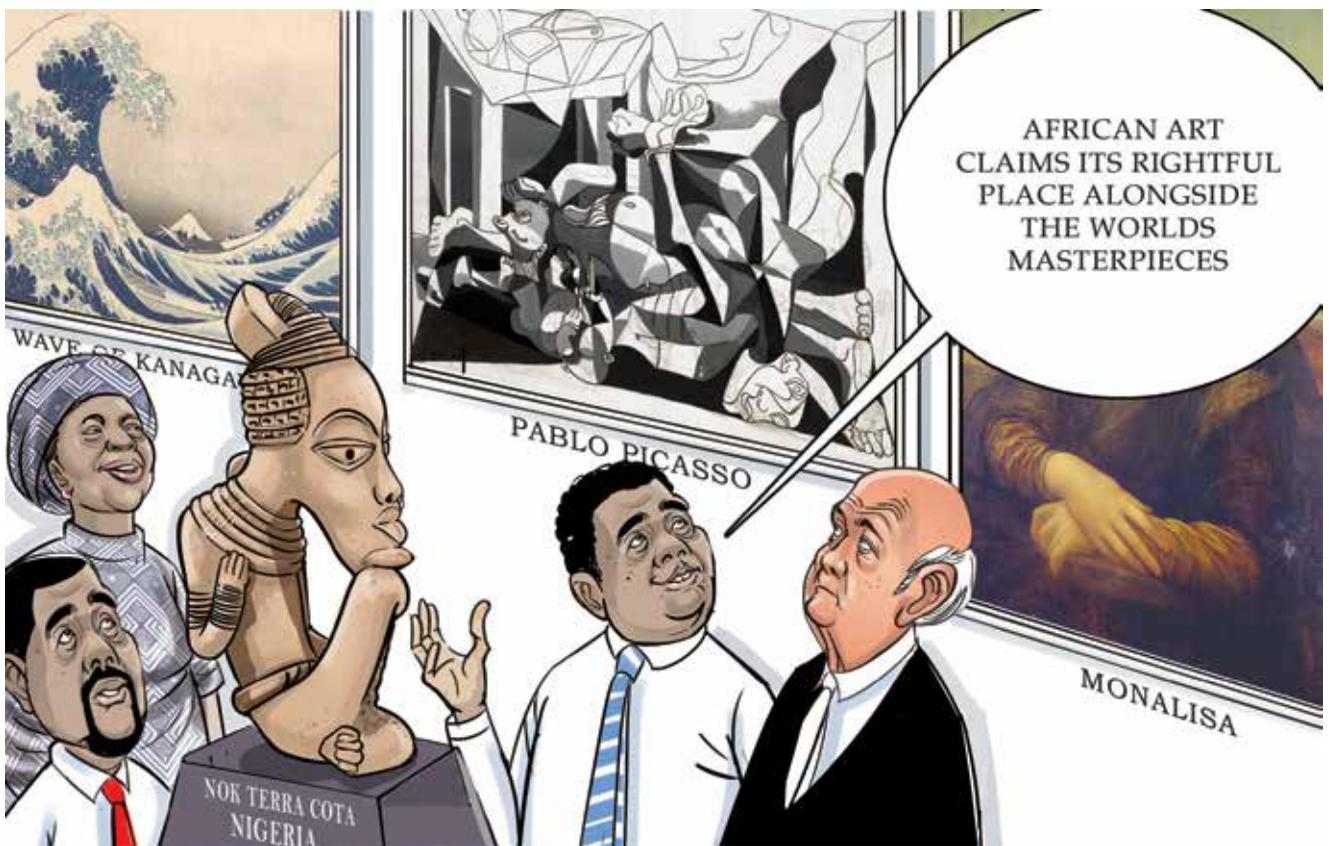
When the first piece of art was found in Nok (present day Kaduna State), no one anticipated that more pieces would be found in areas that are now Plateau, Benue, Kebbi, and Katsina State. The similarity of these pieces planted a seed of curiosity because the common impression held by Europeans at the time was that there was no civilization in Africa before colonization. These art finds were all named after Nok, the first village where they were found and they led to the creation of Nigeria's first purposefully built museum in Jos Plateau state in 1952. When the Jos Museum was being commissioned, it was unimaginable that by 2015, 90 – 95% of Africa's heritage would be held outside the continent.

The Nok culture was one of the earliest societies of western Africa, and is said to have existed in the modern-day Middle belt region of Nigeria from around 2nd to 5th century. The Nok people were known for the production of uniquely styled, and well carved clay terra-cotta sculptures of human figures, animals, and pottery amongst other things. Their social system is thought to have been very advanced for its time. Though no one could tell exactly why they produced these artefacts, it was believed by different people to have served different purposes. Years later, after research by Dr. Nicole Rupp and Dr. Peter Bruneings, it is believed that the artefacts were used to portray their ancestors. To some, the artefacts were used as charms for their field and to others they were just for beautification.

The first Nok figurines were discovered accidentally by tin miners in 1929 while mining a field supervised by the colonialists in the settlement known as Nok. After several lab tests using the radiocarbon machine and thermo luminescence by archaeologists, the figurines were discovered to have existed as far back as 500 BCE. This finding drew the attention of many people to the settlement.

In 1945, the second piece of art was found by a native who used it as a scarecrow. Bernard Fagg, a German archaeologist studied the artefacts and discovered that they belonged to an ancient society known as Nok. After the finding, further excavation was carried out in the surrounding areas and approximately 7,500 artefacts were found in these searches.

Some of the major characteristics of Nok artefacts include terra-cotta head and figure sculptures which are evidence of the high artistic prowess of the people of Nok. By the 1970s, artefacts were sold for high and profitable prices in the international art market and beyond. The Nok sites became popular sites for illegal excavation by locals and foreigners. Artefacts were looted and smuggled out of the country and sold to businessmen who were in contact with international collectors who sold them to other countries such as France, USA, Britain, Japan, Germany and a host of other countries. Experts estimate that hundreds, if not thousands of Nok terracotta figurines were looted



from over 250 sites in Nigeria and sold to museums and private collectors in the global North. In an effort to control the looting, the Federal Government of Nigeria issued Decree 77 (now replaced by the National Commission of Museum and Monument (NCMM) Act, CAP 242) which states that it is illegal to dig up, buy or sell antique goods. The NCMM was created to replace the Federal Antiquities Department, and was tasked with the responsibility of managing the collection, documentation, conservation and preservation of national cultural properties to the public for educational, enlightenment and entertainment purposes. Despite the creation of this public body, artefacts were still being looted as a result of pervasive corruption existing in the system. This has made it difficult to completely stop the illegal trading of artefacts of historical significance. According to NCMM, by 2005 about 90% of Nok artefacts had been looted and smuggled out of the country. The international art community also continues to undermine the authority of the NCMM. A strongly worded letter from NCMM and an online petition attempted to stop Christies, an auction house from selling sacred Igbo sculptures, but the auction went ahead in Paris, with pieces selling for as much as \$240,000 (Gbadamosi, 2020).

Though Nigeria created the NCMM, it demonstrated that the value of preserving history, culture and heritage was lost when the government removed history from primary and secondary school curricula in 2009. According to Dr Akin Alao, a professor of Legal History at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife,

'A country without a sense of history is a soulless country. It could safely be said that many of the challenges facing state and nation-building efforts in Nigeria result from the neglect of history. History of inter-group relations in Nigeria has confirmed the extent of interactions among Nigerian ethnic groups or nationalities long before the imposition of colonial rule. It would have been the duty of History as a subject in schools, to bring these truths to young Nigerians to influence their understanding of life and what roles they could play in cementing the relationship among groups.'

It is worrisome that many of the terracotta heads have been carted away to foreign countries and museums for exhibitions or auctions. The only reminders left of Nok culture in Nigeria are the figurines excavated and preserved by Bernard Fagg. These Nok artefacts are of great importance to the culture and people of Africa at large. They are symbolic of our early existence which has been questioned by many scholars who claimed Africa had no history before the coming of Europeans. Restitution of Nok art is crucial in enabling Nigeria to rebuild our pre-colonial history and culture.

In September 2021, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in a keynote speech at the opening of Humboldt Forum's new ethnological museum in Berlin, spoke very strongly in support of the restitution of African art. She referred to the notion that Africa cannot take care of the art that was stolen from it as 'lacking in basic logic,' since the basis of ownership is not about one's ability to take good care of what is owned. She went on to say:

'This position is paternalistic arrogance of the most stunning sort. It does not matter whether Africans or Asians or Latin Americans can take care of the art stolen from them, what matters is that it is theirs.'

Efforts for the restitution of African artefacts, both physically and digitally, are gaining traction with organisations such as AFEN Group (<https://afengroup.com/>). AFEN Group is leveraging blockchain technology to empower the African art industry by digitizing legacy art and putting it on their NFT (non-fungible token) marketplace. One of these first collaborations is with the Jos Museum, Nigeria's first official museum where many Nok art pieces are housed. Some of these art pieces and artefacts date as far back as 1500 – 2000 BC. This digitalization collaboration is a welcome development by the state government because of the new opportunities it provides. Digitized versions of these legacy art pieces will be in the public domain through the NFT marketplace, while the museums get to keep and protect the physical art. This partnership will also provide financial benefits because people all over the world can engage with and enjoy African art without having to physically be at the museum. The AFEN Group was created by young Africans who are passionate about art, and this places the narrative surrounding African art history and heritage in the hands of Africans. According to AFEN Group's CEO, Deborah Jegede, 'it goes beyond adding value to history items being held up in our museums.' What legacy art listings on AFEN marketplace represents is a lifelong plan to return the lost dignity of our culture and tradition as Africans to Africa.' The efforts by AFEN Group and other organisations are commendable. They are not only a reclaiming of history and a retelling of African narratives about art but also an affirmation of African dignity, confidence and cultural location.

Benmun Damul is a product designer, and writer based in Abuja. Her background is in psychology, and she is fascinated by how human behavior can be leveraged to create systems that make life easier to navigate.

Deborah Kassam is a history graduate of Plateau State University, Nigeria. She is passionate about engaging young people with historical education and art.

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The Egyptian Queen Nefertiti: Presiding over Berlin in forced exile

Mohanad Elsangary

Neferneferuaten Nefertiti was the queen of the 18th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt, alongside Pharaoh Akhenaten, from 1353 to 1336 B.C. and could have ruled the New Kingdom outright after her husband's death. It was a time of great cultural upheaval in Egypt, where Akhenaten threatened the old customs by establishing arguably the world's first monotheistic religion.

The story of our queen was far from over with her death. In 1912, a German Egyptologist called Ludwig Borchardt made a remarkable find at an archaeological dig of what used to be the workshop of King Akhenaten's royal court sculptor, Thutmose, in the then newly established capital city of Amarna. The ruins are near what is now called Minya in Egypt. The find was stunning and included a detailed flawless painted stucco-coated limestone bust of Queen Nefertiti in great condition.

Prior to the expedition, and under British colonialism, an agreement had been drawn with Egyptian authorities to ensure division of every find where lists of all antiquities found had to be shared and inspected by the Egyptian government. The government had also to approve what the German side obtained, usually the duplicated non-unique items. This was overturned in later years when Egypt banned and criminalised all Egyptian antiquities leaving the country.

Even under the unfair colonial laws, Borchardt clearly lied about the find to keep it within the German share, describing the bust as a gypsum, and not limestone statue of an unnamed princess of the royal family. Borchardt knew its importance, as he referred to the bust as the head of Nefertiti in his diary. Furthermore, Swiss and German archeological reports and records from when the bust was discovered show that he kept the bust in a box in his residential tent at Amarna until January 1913. The division process was carried out on-site at the time, in clear violation of 1912 Law No. 14, which stipulated that the division must be held at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, not on site. Borchardt then gave the bust to the expedition's funder, Jacques Simon, who displayed it in his private collection for the next 11 years.

Later in 1922, British Egyptologist Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb and treasures, becoming an international sensation overnight. From this discovery, the glamorisation of ancient Egypt and its rich history became a trend. In 1924, the Germans countered the discovery of the 'British Tut' by their appropriation of the ancient Egyptian marvel, the Nefertiti Bust, displaying it in Berlin and establishing it as a symbol of the German city to date.

Despite the turbulence and wars in Europe throughout the 20th Century, and despite multiple attempts made by the Egyptian government to reclaim the 3,400-year-old bust, the Germans were always adamant about not returning the queen's bust to its home.

Egypt started to demand the restitution of the bust in 1925, formally threatening to ban all German excavations in the country unless the Nefertiti bust was returned. In 1929, the government of Egypt even offered to exchange other artefacts for the bust of the queen,

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Egypt started to demand the restitution of the bust in 1925, formally threatening to ban all German excavations in the country unless the Nefertiti bust was returned. In 1929, the government of Egypt even offered to exchange other artefacts for the bust of the queen, but Germany declined. They made further attempts in the 1930s and 1940s to no avail. Adolf Hitler, who is reported to have adored the Nefertiti Bust, refused to return it, (in)famously stating 'I will never relinquish the head of the Queen.'

but Germany declined. They made further attempts in the 1930s and 1940s to no avail. Adolf Hitler, German Chancellor and founder the Nazi movement that was responsible for the death of over a million Jews during the Second World War, who is reported to have adored the Nefertiti Bust, refused to return it, (in)famously stating 'I will never relinquish the head of the Queen.'

After the Second World War, the Egyptian government requested the Allied Control Council to return the bust. The council refused, saying that this wasn't within the scope of their authority, and that Egypt should resubmit their request once a new stable German government was formed. Yet after the government was formed, Germany refused to respond to calls made by the Egyptian government throughout the 1950s.

In 2005, Zahi Hawass, Egypt's former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs, renewed calls to return the bust among other stolen antiquities. As usual, the German side met the calls with complete refusal. In 2006, he made another request, this time for a three-month loan of the bust to be displayed in the soon-to-be-opened museum of Pharaoh Akhenaten's ancient city near Minya, ancient Amarna. The Germans turned down the request, stating they had concerns about the transportation and display of the bust, contending that it could be damaged. There was concern from Egypt that the request for loan could legally weaken Egypt's claim to the bust, by implicitly recognising Germany's authority over the stolen artefact.

Currently, anyone who wants to marvel at the unbelievable beauty, grace and magnificence of Queen Nefertiti's bust, must be privileged enough to be able to travel to Berlin, to the Neues Museum. The queen remains the museum's centrepiece and receives approximately a million visitors a year. There, she has become one of the symbols of Berlin, a foreign city thousands of miles away from home.

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The Amulet of Forgetting: We Cannot Forget and We Cannot Forgive

Madina Yéhouétomè, Sara Tassi, Saskia Cousin

« *One cannot forgive, but one can forget* ». *Proverb from Southern Benin.*

In Paris, France, the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum (MQB) preserves more than 70,000 pieces of African cultural property, 46,000 of which entered during the colonial period. 3,157 objects are believed to have come from the former Danxome (Dahomey), now the Republic of Benin (not to be confused with Benin City, located in Nigeria). Since the 1990s, activists from Benin and its diaspora - including descendants of King Behanzin exiled to Martinique in the late 19th century - have been calling for the return of the colonial booty from the 1892 sack of Abomey, often referred to as the treasure of Behanzin. In 2016, the government of the Republic of Benin requested the return of its cultural property. The restitution was rejected in the name of the French principle of inalienability of French national heritage. However, in 2017, in Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso, the French president Emmanuel Macron committed to return the African heritage. Following this declaration, the French National Assembly passed an exceptional law allowing the return of 26 cultural properties to the Republic of Benin and one sword to Senegal. The other cultural belongings of the former Danxome were not returned. Thus, and despite requests and mobilizations for its return, so is the famous vodun deity Gou (Beaujean-Baltzer 2007; Murphy 2009, Tassi et al. 2016), currently on display at the Pavillon des Sessions in the Louvre in Paris. Other collections have been almost forgotten. This is particularly true of the collection of the merchant Édouard Foà, which entered a French ethnographic museum in 1891. This collection includes agojiée bo, i.e. amulets that belonged to the warrior women of Abomey, known as Amazons. We will mention here a bo made of human remains and an iguana head, designated as a "destructive bo" in the rare research that concerns it. If the story of its abduction sums up the original violence of French colonial collections, we are also interested in what several powerful women from Abomey say about it in 2021. According to their testimony, it is a "bo of forgetting," that is, a magical power that causes forgetting and confusion.

A history of violence

Between 1890 and 1894, France led a colonial war against the kingdom of Abomey and its king Behanzin. Thousands of Dahomean soldiers, including many *agojiée*, better known as the 'Amazons of Dahomey', fought an army composed of French, Senegalese and Gabonese soldiers. In 1892, faced with the advance of Colonel Dodds' troops, King Behanzin set fire to his palaces in Abomey and took to the woods with his remaining army. Colonel Dodds and his soldiers seized many possessions, including thrones, the gates of the royal palace, and monumental statues of the kings of Danxome. These are the goods currently being returned, known as the 'treasure of Behanzin.' The sack of Abomey is well known: it falls within the "official" period of the colonial war, from 1892 to 1894. However, bloody battles that do not appear in the official history took place as early as 1890. We mention here the battle of March 4, 1890, provoked by the French traders and in particular the agent Édouard Foà, present during the battle:

« *We found, on the battlefield, two or three Amazons, one of whom was very young and still alive, but seriously wounded; she was finished off like all those who were not found dead. Another Amazon was killed by a bullet while she was busy cutting off the head of a Gabonese corporal. At dawn, a third was caught inside the palisades, carrying sulfur and matches with the obvious intention of setting fire to the factories*" (Foà, 1895: 383).



At the end of the battle, the merchant Édouard Foà collects weapons and amulets from the bodies of the Dahomey warriors. A few weeks later, he returned to France. In 1891, he gave the Trocadero Museum 131 objects (Beaujean, 2019). According to the museum's notes, at least nine were collected from the bodies of Behanzin's warriors during the battle of March 4: a bag, a horn, a cord, a necklace and five amulets. The violence of the battle and of this 'collection' was neither hidden nor denounced at the time: Édouard Foà described the battles, the Amazons' costumes, and the amulets (Foà, 1895). He was qualified as a "scientific explorer" or ethnographer by the magazines to which he contributed. He received numerous medals and literary prizes and was even the subject of a room dedicated to scientific exploration at the 1900 Universal Exhibition.

A history of burial and confusion

For a century, this macabre booty was considered an ethnographic collection. With the creation of the Musée du Quai Branly in 2006, the colonial violence at the origin of the collections is not questioned. As Sally Price (2007) notes, it disappears in an aesthetic and decontextualized scenography. In the West, information on Amazon amulets is scarce and fragmented.

However, as part of a temporary exhibition organized in 2009, research was conducted in Abomey with three "traditionalist" men. This research made it possible to attribute a name, an origin and a meaning to several amulets. Thus, our amulet described for the first time by Suzanne Preston-Blier in 2009 in the exhibition catalog 'Artists of Abomey' directed by Gaëlle Beaujean-Baltzer:

"The bo in the Quai Branly Museum's collection, called afiyohuti or 'destroyer', was found in a bag belonging to an ahossi woman who died in battle during the battle between King Behanzin's troops and the French army in Cotonou. This powerful object consists of a human jaw and the head of a monitar lizard, both assembled

and separated by two pieces of wood, bound with cord. Each of these elements alone or in combination contributes to the effectiveness of the object. The cord, for example, refers in part to the idea of imprisonment, signifying both aggression and protection” (Preston-Blier, 2009: 249).

However, this information is not widely available to the public, unlike the records in the online inventory. These notices are a synthesis between the original entries from the indications of the “donor” Foà and the testimonies of the “traditionalists” collected in the late 2000s. Osteoarchaeological descriptions, which appeared on the online inventory in January 2021¹, disappeared in July, as did the photos of our amulet which had disappeared six months earlier (but are still on Wikipedia). This informs us about the difficulty that the museum has in documenting and restoring the history of its collections - in the face of the confusion created by this history, which is as violent as it is unknown, burial and forgetting are easier. In this context, our approach is both simple and complicated: it is a matter of listening to the living (or better: the living) and restoring their word. In this case, to restore the word of women who are very little solicited despite their great knowledge of amulets.

An ambivalent *Bo*

Here is what the experts we met in May and June 2021 told us about the *bo*. Most of them spoke in Fon, the language of Abomey:

Christine, an agojiée from Hangbe V: “If there is a conflict between two people or two families, this ‘*bo*’ allows the situation to be calmed. If one opponent has made an angry statement, but the other has made this ‘*bo*’, the matter will only be lessened or completely extinguished. The person concerned will no longer be able to react as he or she wished in his or her heart.

Kpojito Djenan: *afinhonxoci* is a *bo*. If someone does something dangerous, he “holds up” this *bo* so that all those who were concerned in this dangerous matter quickly forget the situation. It’s the *bo* that calms a situation down”. She explains that this *bo* can be used as a preventive measure: “If you wear it on you, you will change what people think about you. It will allow you to better face their reactions”.

The powers of the *bo* are, as in the vodun, always ambivalent: they can be positive or negative, depending on their use. This is what Yvette, one of the agojiée we met at Hangbexwè, the family home of Hangbé, explains to us: “Sometimes, we also use this type of *bo* to make ourselves loved. It’s the *bo* for couples. People make these *bo* to get men completely”. His word is confirmed by Agasuno, priest of the vodun Agasu, one of the most important deities of the kingdom of Danxome: “There is not one type of *afinhonxoci*. But they are all called *afinhonxoci* : [...] You can also make this *bo* so that your husband’s vodun-ancestors will not rise up against you when you go to commit adultery with your lover. [...] *sohonxoci* is in everything. This *bo* does not have a single function”.

In Abomey, this *bo* holds an important place. It can be considered as a companion in the service of the thoughts, desires and wishes of its owner. Its uses can be personal but also political and diplomatic, especially in times of war. Kpojito Adonon thus explains that the purpose can be to make one forget the reason for the war, or even the wealth that was stolen:

“It was for certain reasons that they had started the war in the first place, right? If this pen is the reason we started the war, you will have

to forget about this pen. In the same way, if I bring back a treasure from the war, I have to make those who owned it during the war forget about it. It is absolutely necessary that the owner does not come back for what belonged to him, what was stolen. He must forget.

According to Kpojito Djènan, this glo is also used to make people forget attacks, to avoid revenge: "If, for example, there is a war, the warriors come here and kill everyone. Then they leave and go to do *afinhonxoci* in order to calm the situation so that we who suffered the attack, we say to ourselves "everything they did, it's good". And everything calms down. We won't go to their house for revenge. That's what we call *afinhonxoci*".

Yvette summarizes the objective and the terms of use: "the opponent must forget everything! We talk to this bo on the battlefield, in the bush. You have to talk to it regularly for it to work well. Queen Hangbe evokes the diplomatic role of this amulet in times of war: "*Afinhonxoci* makes it possible to completely confuse things so that the person concerned completely forgets the situation." *Afinhonxoci* is less a destructive bo than a bo of silence, confusion and forgetting.

Activating the power of silence

This amulet contains a human mandible, a common 'ingredient' according to the Vodun priest Agasuno:

"The bo in which people use the human mandible to make are many. For example, if someone uses the human mandible to make a bo against you and you go to court, you will never succeed in court. The trial will turn out badly, in front of the judge if you are asked a question, you will say "ha, ha, ha" that is to say that your tongue will not pronounce any word". He explains that "Different ingredients are involved in the composition of this bo. In your document [the MQB inventory card that we show him], they wrote that they made this bo with a mandible, but they didn't write down the other things that go into making this bo. As with all bo, the ingredients are nothing without the "incantatory words" (*bogbe* or *gbésisa*) that "attach" them to activate them.

This is what Bokono lissa achina dah toboko, diviner of *Kpojito Djenan*, explains to us: 'the incantatory words that accompany this bo *afionxochi* are: '*aganlanka do ton ma hun ao, agato na hun bo do xo a*', i.e., 'if the jaw below cannot open to speak, neither can the one above open to speak'. Everything you thought and wanted to say will remain in your mouth'.

Conclusion A history of reactivation

The power of the bo *afinhonxoci* lies in its ability to block speech, silence, confuse, confound, and forget. In South Benin, about slavery, colonial wars, or more intimate violence, it is often said, "you can't forgive, but you can forget." This is precisely the use of *afinhonxoci*: to make people forget what cannot be forgiven. While Western experts oscillate between technical descriptions and burying the traces of colonial violence, our local experts introduce us to the knowledge-power of this "thing". Their knowledge reveals to us that the materiality of this box is less important than the memory that it conceals, its relational power. What these women tell us restores something of the history, the destiny, but also the capacity for action of this bo, of their ancestors and of themselves. As always ambivalent, *afinhonxoci* embodies the forgetting in which are held both the powers of colonial destruction and the powers of female transmissions, their *matrimoine* (Hertz 2002). The future will tell if the reactivation of the words of the women of Abomey allows the museum to free itself from confusion, recover memory, and restore what has been stolen.

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¹« After osteoarchaeological examination, it is probably a male mandible, the dental wear (...) would indicate a person aged 35/40 years. (...). Osteophythisis on the left on the neck of the mandible on the lingual side and erosion of the condyle on the right. Use: Magic use. Found in the bag of a dead man, on the battlefield of Kotonou, March 4, 1890 » », <<https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/explorer-les-collections/base/Work/action/show/notice/195329-amulette/page/7/>>.

Jahazi is committed to the realisation of the aspirations of the African people as articulated in the African Union Agenda 2063. The voices of the African people are loud and clear:

THE VOICES OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE

1. We, the people of Africa and her Diaspora, united in diversity, young and old, men and women, girls and boys from all walks of life, deeply conscious of history, express our deep appreciation to all generations of Pan-Africanists. In particular, to the founders of the Organisation of African Unity for having bequeathed us an Africa with exemplary successes in the fight against slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Agenda 2063, rooted in Pan Africanism and African Renaissance, provides a robust framework for addressing past injustices and the realisation of the 21st Century as the African Century.

2. We echo the Pan-African call that Africa must unite in order to realize its Renaissance. Present generations are confident that the destiny of Africa is in their hands, and that they must act now to shape the future they want. Fifty years after the first thirty-three (33) independent African states took a landmark decision to form the Organization of African Unity, we are looking ahead towards the next fifty years.

3. In this new and noble initiative, past plans and commitments have been reviewed, and we pledge to take into account lessons from them as we implement Agenda 2063. These include: mobilization of the people and their ownership of continental programmes at the core; the principle of self-reliance and Africa financing its own development; the importance of capable, inclusive and accountable states and institutions at all levels and in all spheres; the critical role of Regional Economic Communities as building blocks for continental unity; taking into account of the special challenges faced by both island and land-locked states; and holding ourselves and our governments and institutions accountable for results. Agenda 2063 will not happen spontaneously, it will require conscious and deliberate efforts to nurture a transformative leadership that will drive the agenda and defend Africa's interests.

4. We rededicate ourselves to the enduring Pan African vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

Source: Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want.

Looted Treasures of Maqdala Trickle Back: Signs of Things to Come?

Shiferaw Tadesse

The spoils from Ethiopia's battle of Maqdala in 1868 are slowly being returned. Artefacts returned at a handover ceremony held on September 8, 2021, at Athenaeum Club in London, UK, include a hand-written religious text, crosses, an imperial shield, a set of beakers, an icon, and a scroll. Scheherazade Foundation had procured these through a Dorset-based auction house and private dealers in mainland Europe. Ethiopians interviewed for this article expressed hope that more of these artefacts would be returned.

Ethiopian Emperor Tewodros II, who fought against the British military expedition led by General Robert Napier, had established Maqdala, a village in northern Ethiopia, as the seat of his kingdom and here he stored a massive collection of cultural heritage. Memihir Daniel Seifemichael, Head of Foreign Affairs and Ecumenical Relations at the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) notes that having the artefacts at one place in Maqdala made the pillage during the British military expedition easy for the looters. In the same tone, Assistant Professor Abebaw Ayalew, Deputy Director General of the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritages, states that the looting at Maqdala was special for two reasons, one is because of the emperor's huge collection of various artefacts in one place, and second, the British came in well prepared and organized for the purpose.

Among the looted treasures at Maqdala were many church objects, including Tabots (consecrated Altar Slabs) as well as an infinite variety of crosses made of gold, silver and brass, as well as large quantities of parchment royally illuminated, priestly crowns, staffs of bishops, and golden chalices. According to Dr Ayalew Sisay, Senior Expert of Tourism, the largest part of the loot consisted of the books of parchment and crosses.

After the looting at Maqdala, an auction was held at Dalanta to plan for the sale of pillaged objects collected by the soldiers. While some of the treasures were purchased by the British Museum, the rest were taken away by individual soldiers. Scholars note that as a result the process of resitution has been hampered by the difficulty of tracking artefacts not procured by the museum. Among those include Kwer'ata Re'esu, a painting, showing Jesus Christ looking downward, an icon of huge social and religious significance which was carried and taken out in times of war campaigns and the Ethiopic manuscript of the Kebra Nagast, or Glory of Kings (the national epic). According to the Association for the Return of the Maqdala Ethiopia Treasures (AFROMET), British Museum returned the Kebra Nagast in 1873 at the request of Emperor Yohannes IV.

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Memihir Daniel says the EOTC has a clear policy on cultural heritage and has been taking deliberate measures in preservation and restoration of its treasures. He notes that restitution and repatriation are more meaningful when the property is restored to its rightful place. He underlines that it would be meaningless if a cross is returned and kept at a museum. Assistant Professor Abebaw reiterates that once a treasure is returned, and its origin identified, especially if it has religious or spiritual significance, it should be returned to the owner. For instance, if Tabot (consecrated Altar Slab) is returned, the EOTC will deliver it to Maqdala; as with other properties with similar spiritual significance. If the property is of another value, the Authority would keep it. And if it is a property with literary value or importance, it would be sent to the national library and archive.

In his remarks during the September 8th, 2021 handover ceremony of the recently returned artefacts in London, Ethiopian diplomat Teferi Melesse Desta expressed hope that more Maqdala-looted cultural heritage would be returned home.

Zerabiruk Desalegn, a graduate from a private university in Addis Ababa, says the returning of such artefacts raises hope and drives further efforts for restitution. *'These treasures express identities, and their return has high significance, including reinforcing unity and building of our people.'*

Approached for this article, Fikerte Teka, a Tour Operator in Addis Ababa, says that it is really embarrassing to have precious objects of importance to the country and its people held overseas. *'We are now hearing good news, especially recently in June and September, about returning of precious properties; I am really happy about this, and we hope that more of such cultural and historical properties would be returned in the future.'*

In November 2020, Ethiopia established a National Heritage Restoration Committee of 20 members comprising prominent figures and professionals. The move is believed to enhance restitution and restoration efforts at national level by different institutions and individuals both at home and abroad. Some scholars in Ethiopia emphasise the need for a new international legal framework for restitution and restoration of Africa's cultural heritage looted before the coming into effect of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

Sheferaw Tadesse is an Ethiopian journalist based in Addis Ababa.

Bring Back the Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom Instruments of Power

Kiiza Wilson

The Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom was one of the powerful ancient empires of East Africa whose ruler carried the title of the *Omukama* (King). The kingdom is inhabited by Bantu-speaking people who speak Runyakitara/Runyoro language. It was administratively organised on sazaship polity headed by Saza chiefs and divided into other small administrative units.

It enjoyed power until the arrival of Europeans in Uganda in 1894. Today, it is situated in Western Uganda, covering most the Albertine Rift Valley. The Bunyoro Kingdom is a remnant of the ancient Kingdom of Kitara¹ and now covers geographical area that is a quarter of what it was at its peak.

The prolonged war between the Bunyoro Kingdom on one side and the British, Baganda and other mercenaries on the other resulted in the transfer of a large chunk of her land in February 1894 by Colonel Colville, to the Buganda Kingdom. The annexation of part of its territories saw Bunyoro lose six Sazas of Bunyara, Buruli, Rugonja, Buyaga, Buwekula and Bugangaizi to Buganda as a reward for their service to the British during the war against Bunyoro. The annexed land is what came to be known as 'the lost counties.'² Within those counties, Bunyoro lost sites of cultural and political importance including two royal tombs sites in the present day Kyankwanzi District, King Ndahura's palace and coronation hill in Mubende which the British termed witch tree. In their petition to the Privy Councillors Commission set up to investigate the issue of the lost counties in 1961, the Mubende Banyoro Committee quoting J.E.P. Postlethwaite, the former Provincial Commissioner of Buganda wrote 'in any case, it seemed impossible to make up for the loss to the unfortunate Bunyoro of what was their Holy of Holies and the real centre of their Kingdom.' The injustice has partially been corrected as two counties of Buyaga and Bugangaizi were returned to Bunyoro.

The kingdom was rundown by the British who toppled and exiled her leader, Kabalega in 1899 and took away his royal emblems. In November 1894 Captain Thruston attacked Omukama Kabalega at Rwepindu in the present-day Masindi district. In the process, he captured the *kajumba* drum, two royal spears (*amahango*) and the throne (*nyamyaro*). These were sent to Colonel Colville, who took the *kajumba* back to England³. *Kajumba* was a royal drum that was sounded during the new king's coronation, and the eight-legged wooden stool (*nyamyaro*) was a throne. According to Apollo Rwemparo⁴, the King sat on *nyamyaro* on the annual coronation anniversary (*empango* in Runyoro), during adjudication of the cases involving his subjects and at least once at every new moon appearance.

No stool, no king, no throne

The importance of the stool in the cultural setup of the kingdom is captured by the statement made by the former Private Secretary to the Omukama Iguru Solomon Gafabusa, Mr Yolamu Nsamba; who reiterated '*All those installed after Kabalega were not properly installed in office. Solomon Iguru*

¹S. J. K. Baker, Bunyoro: A Personal Appreciation, Uganda Journal,

²Dunbar, A history of Bunyoro Kitara, Oxford University.

was not properly installed. Without the stool there is no king, no throne'⁵ he told the UK Guardian in 2014.

*It has been said that the British purposefully took the royal emblems named above after knowing their cardinal importance in the power matrix of the kingdom they were ravaging. That is why after overthrowing Omukama Kabalega, the British installed their puppet, Omukama Kitahimbwa using the same tools they had stolen from Kabalega's palace before taking them to England.*⁶

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The royal drum, Kajumba, was crafted during the reign of the Bachwezi empire and had served many kings until it was captured and looted by the British. Kajumba was famous for producing three sounds at the same time. It was sounded when the king was going to perform rituals, and during the times of wars to summon all the able-bodied men to go to war against any external attack on the kingdom. In fact, taking power in Runyoro language is figuratively called 'taking the drum' – *akwatwara ngoma* (he took a drum). Therefore, the drum is a key component in the power matrix in this kingdom.

Rwemparo continues to say that the amahango (royal spears) were sacred and spiritual and were key in the King's security. The Omukama moved with them during wars and rituals, and by the time they were taken, they were over 700 years old and had served many Kings and dynasties.

Kabalega was the ruler during whose reign the above artefacts were looted in 1894 and Solomon Iguru is the incumbent Omukama (cultural leader) of Bunyoro Kingdom. The royal emblems and other artefacts are displayed at the University of Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum in London, United Kingdom and other museums in the Western World.

It is estimated that the British colonisers took over 300 artefacts from the Kingdom of Bunyoro. Nsamba (2017) states that the incumbent ruler of Bunyoro was crowned in 1994 while seated on Kaizirokwera, an ancient Batembuzi/Bachwezi throne, and not on the Nyamyaro, the Bunyoro throne that is still kept at Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

To fully appreciate the cultural value of the stolen wooden eight-legged throne, one should know that it had served three dynasties – Batembuzi, Bachwezi and Babito, and it was believed to be over 700 years old by the time it was captured and taken to the United Kingdom by the British.⁷ By taking that throne, the British cut the spiritual link between these three dynasties.

The assertion by the global North that Africa doesn't value their cultural heritage is misleading and egoistic on their part. Before the arrival of the white man, Africans had working systems in governance, production, local and international trade, an organised system of worship and advanced medical practices. For example, the Banyoro were already performing caesarean section surgery before the arrival of the British in East Africa. However, there were sustained efforts during colonization to sabotage the traditional systems, structures and practices. Connah (1996:2) recognises the role of western culture in destroying many African traditional practices.⁸

To argue that Africans don't value their heritage without mentioning the roles played by the missionaries and the colonialists would be missing the point. The missionaries began by tagging African culture with derogatory terms

³J.W. Nyakatura, Abakama (Kings) of Bunyoro – Kitara, 1999:161

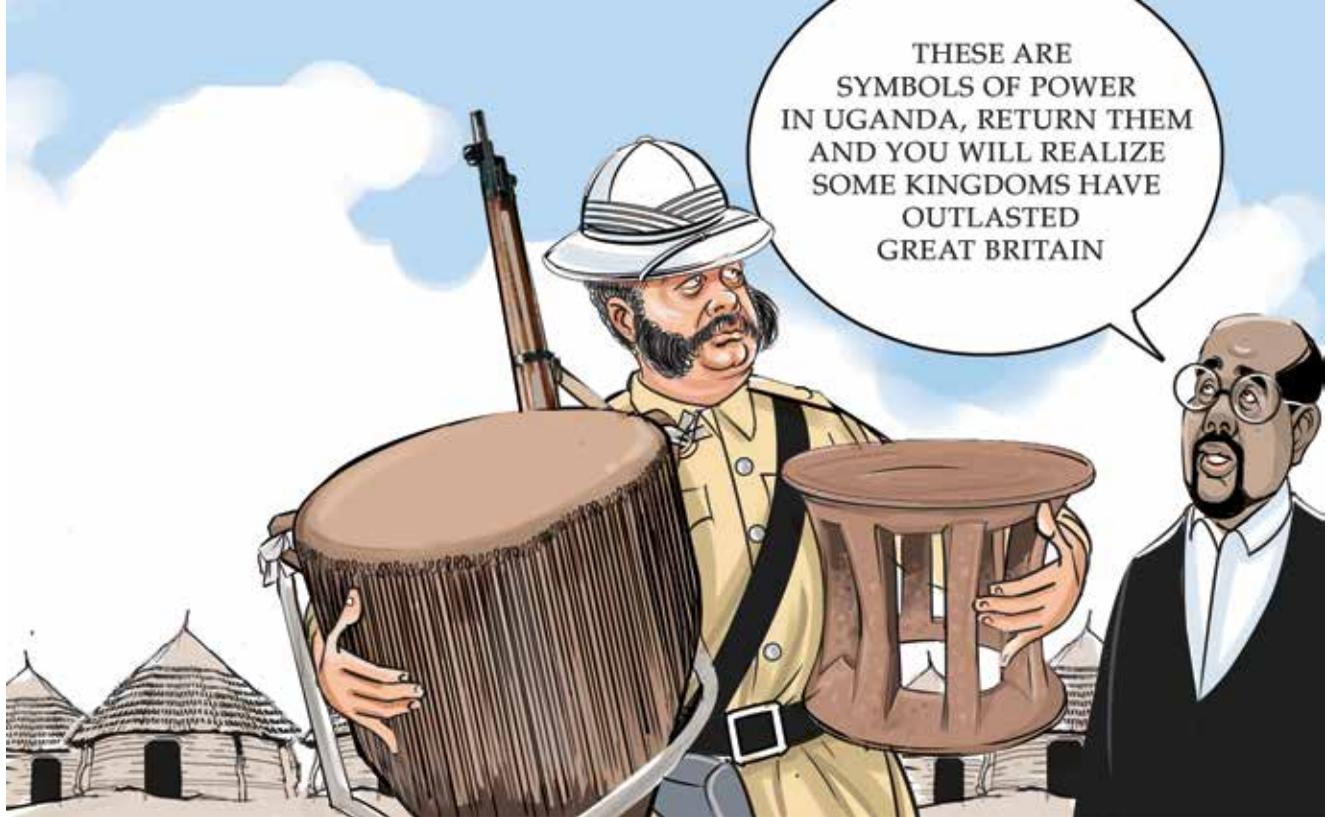
⁴The Incumbent Second Deputy Prime Minister, Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom.

⁵"The Guardian, Ugandan King battles oxford museum over lost throne, 14th June, 2021

⁶Robert Rukahemura

⁷G, Mwijuke, The fight for a stool: Bunyoro wants its seat of power back, 8th June, 2021, The East African,

⁸Graham Connah (1996), Resource exploitation and population aggregation: The case of Kibiro.



such as evil, ghost, animism, backward and savage to mention a few. They began rewarding Africans who had accepted to convert to the new religion with western education, health care and gifts. The Christian missionaries also began campaigns to have artefacts related to African worship destroyed and the spiritual damage can be felt to date.

One of the vital sacred sites in Bunyoro Kingdom was Pajaawu, which an imperial agent, Sir Samuel Baker renamed Murchison Falls. This traditional shrine was declared part of Murchison Falls National Park, and hence the locals were restricted from accessing it. It was the only site where the Omukama could offer sacrifices to appease the spirits of his kingdom to avert calamities.

The above notwithstanding, there was covert work by some Africans determined to conserve their cultural heritage despite persecution by the imperialists. This made it possible for aspects of African culture to survive despite the hostile conditions. In Uganda today, there are on-going efforts by different ethnic groups to conserve and promote culture by growing the community museums movement. These communities have started museums dedicated to collecting, documenting, disseminating, promoting and preserving information and cultural heritage under the Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA) for a stronger voice.

In addition, there are ongoing individual efforts to promote culture. For example, the queen of Buganda Kingdom initiated the *ekisaakaate* where children are brought together and taught the Kiganda culture, skills and values during their school holidays. The *ekisaakate* is also held in the United Kingdom, targeting the Baganda who live there. Across Uganda, there are cultural groups promoting traditional art and craftmaking and troupes promoting diverse traditional dances. At the national level, there is the Uganda Nedagala Lyayo, an association of committed herbalists and traditional healers who promote African herbal medicine and spirituality.

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It's not just about returning artefacts, but kingship – power and authority and an ancestral inspiration that has eluded the kingdom for 127 years since the royal emblems were looted.

Conclusion

Based on the importance of the stolen royal emblems, I join the rest of cultural heritage enthusiasts to call for the repatriation of the above artefacts. The call for the repatriation of the emblems by the Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and his subjects, some of who operate under the pressure group, Bunyoro Kitara Reparation Agency, has succeeded partially since only financial compensation was authorised by the Queen of England though it did not reach the intended beneficiary, the Bunyoro Kingdom. Oxford University has denied having the stolen nyamyaro, have in their possession a ceremonial stool and other artefacts from Bunyoro 'donated' by the Tooro Kingdom prince, Akiiki Kanyarusoke Nyabongo.⁹ Apollo wonders why a Prince from another Kingdom donated Bunyoro artefacts.

It's not just about returning artefacts, but kingship – power and authority and an ancestral inspiration that has eluded the kingdom for 127 years since the royal emblems were looted.

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Ndoome: The Tale of the Agikuyu Dancing Shield of Identity and Unity

Njeri Gachihi

African cultural objects are the tangible manifestation of inherent indigenous intangible knowledge. The disappearance of these objects through theft and plunder during encounters with the European colonialists depleted the continent of its cultural, social and economic assets and had implications on the intangible knowledge of the African societies. The skills and techniques specific to these objects' production, reproduction, and improvement disappeared. Knowledge transfer across generations was therefore interrupted.

As a British settler colony between 1920 and 1963, Kenya was heavily impacted by the plunder of her heritage that included ethnographic materials and objects, traditional medicine whose use was proscribed through the enactment of witchcraft legislation, human remains, and fauna and flora materials. While Kenya's indigenous heritage continued to be eroded, the British introduced their concept of heritage focused on built heritage and archaeological remains.

They used their new concept of heritage together with the prevailing racial prejudices to associate the existing built heritage in Kenya with other cultures thought to be more advanced than local Africans. On another front, Western religion was used to erode the trust and use of traditional craft and indigenous knowledge. Out of good faith, newly converted Africans gave away their sacred and ritualistic objects to the missionaries, with the latter taking such objects ostensibly for destruction, but in reality, they ended up in museum stores in the global North.

Loss of objects is equivalent to the loss of important forms of community expression, identity and indigenous knowledge, and loss of both the tangible and intangible knowledge. Some of the objects stolen from Kenya, such as *ngaji*, the Pokomo drum, were integral to the community's well-being as they reinforced the community's sense of identity and continuity with the past. Such objects were taken away at a time when the skilled craftsmen who made them had died without passing on the knowledge to other members of the community. This loss of skills, the software of crafts making, has also seen societies lose valuable cultural assets.

One such community is the Agikuyu people, who had an intense encounter with the colonialists with devastating outcomes. In this article, I focus on one object, *Ndoome*, a leaf-shaped wooden object carved in the shape of a shield (*Ngo*). *Ndoome* is a culturally important ritual object, an asset in rites of passage, especially in circumcision ceremonies. In 2010, I interacted with this object in a museum in the global North for the first time. Since then, I have never been the same. This object that had a name tag saying it was from my country has been haunting me, literally. I have, since then, spent time looking for information that relates to this exceptional object. This has been done with the support of the National Museums of Kenya, British Museum's International Training Programme, the International Inventories Programme and the Rethinking Relationships Programme.

Who collected *Ndoome*?

In trying to find out how the *ndoome* got to WKM, Frankfurt, one name came up, William Ockleford Oldman. Literature and archival research revealed that he did not

Western religion was used to erode the trust and use of traditional craft and indigenous knowledge. Out of good faith, newly converted Africans gave away their sacred and ritualistic objects to the missionaries, with the latter taking such objects ostensibly for destruction, but in reality, they ended up in museum stores in the global North.



A picture of *Ndoome* (front side) clearly shows the three colours namely, ochre, white and dark blue.
Source: Gikuyu Centre for Cultural Studies.

travel though his collection was massive. In some records, he is referred to as the dealer who never travelled but collected a lot. He mainly bought and sold cultural artefacts from Africa, America, South East Asia and Europe. His main interests were in weapons and armour. Recent research has revealed that Oldman had two different letterheads: 'Dealer in Weapons & Curiosities' and 'Dealer in Ethnographic Specimens, Eastern Arms'. This has been confirmed from the archival records of Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne. The origins and destinations of the artefacts bought and resold by William O. Oldman matched with colonial trade networks, which still determine the global allocation of cultural goods today. At the time of acquisition, British colonial government ruled over East Africa and henceforth, Oldman greatly benefited in his trade from the unequal balance of power in favour of the Europeans. His dealership led to a widespread distribution of cultural artefacts in Western museums, which is evidenced by the collections in Europe.

The object

Ndoome is a Kikuyu name referring to a leaf-shaped wooden object that has a very similar shape to a traditional African shield. It is often decorated with zigzag incised patterns, red, white, black and sometimes blue pigments. This particular artefact is a ceremonial object known to have been used by boys who were preparing for initiation among the Agikuyu people of Central Kenya. Although some boys preferred to carve their own, *ndoome* was usually carved by special craftsmen, who exchanged them for goatskins or other goods. The *ndoome* were specifically crafted for use during the initiation season.

On its reverse, *ndoome* is decorated with carved zigzag designs painted in red ochre, blue and white. It has an arm grip carved from solid wood, used to fasten it on the biceps during dances. *Ndoome* was made from light wood sourced from *muninga*, (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) or *mukungugu* (*Commiphora eminii*). After the plain *ndoome* was acquired, the initiate then decorated it as per direction and guidance of that particular *riika* (age group). Each *riika* had a selection of patterns as an identity. It is said that the patterns used by the initiates were an identity that they carried on to make the *ngo* (shield) when they entered the warrior stage. The meaning embedded on each *ndoome* is said to have been a secret only shared among members of that particular age group.

Significance to the Agikuyu community

Ndoome was specifically used for *Muumuro* dance, the great dance that happened the night before circumcision. Boys of each territorial unit had theirs decorated the same way each year. The design or pattern on the outer side of the object was agreed upon many months in advance. After graduating, a used *ndoome* was not thrown away but was passed on to a younger brother who was preparing himself to be initiated. New initiates scrapped off the old decoration and repainted it with the new design adopted by their group. New *ndoome* were only acquired if there were several boys preparing for initiation at the same time and not enough *ndoome* to go around. Sustainable utilisation of resources is evident since communities never harvest the raw materials unnecessarily. As revealed during research, *ndoome* was a compulsory costume for each initiate during *marara nja* (vigil night).

Circumcision is an important ritual ceremony among the Giküyü community. It marks a critical stage of transition from childhood to adulthood. Initiates are taken through the steps awaiting them in their new roles as adults. Bravery is highly valued among the Giküyü men, and enduring the physical cut is one way of equipping the initiates with the requisite strength to play their rightful roles in society. At the turn of the century, circumcision took place every two years for young men aged 14–16 years.

Looking at the patterns, our key informant Mzee wa Njugi explained in detail the symbolism involved. Patterns provide an identity for clans and families which are important in upholding clan identities and affiliations and reinforcing family networks that are fast disappearing due to massive urbanisation. The pattern and colouration symbolise the trinity and acts as the community's badge or flag identifying them as a cultural group. The brown symbolises the colour of their surrounding – soil (femininity), and the colour of the skins and hides that were used as clothing by the community. Cowrie shells often represent the white colour and so the white ochre represents the community's union with their Maker, who they believed lived on top of snow-capped Mt. Kenya. Blue stands for the sky (masculinity).

Mzee wa Njugi further added that bravery is a highly valuable tenet of a Gikuyu man, and they were not supposed to show emotions such as pain, grief and anger. The shield is a symbol that served to remind the young men of their responsibility and acted as preparation for the young initiates' roles: protecting his family, clan, community, and nation in times of danger.

What does the absence of *Ndoome* mean to the Agikuyu community?

Since this was an important part of the initiation ceremonies of the Agikuyu people, the absence of the object brings with it serious implications. While *ndoome* is stored safely in showcases and stores of museums and collection centres in other countries outside the continent, at home groups trying to reconstruct their culture, tradition, and history are at a loss. One elder who is among those leading the ongoing revival, could not hide his excitement when he was shown a picture of the *ndoome*. He revealed to the team that he had tried to re-create this object through oral narratives, but the results were unsuccessful. Therefore, this kind of loss of tangible heritage contributes to the loss of the intangible heritage of a people – skills, meanings & practices. This is only the tip of the iceberg regarding recorded losses, since the stolen objects carry with them the valuable, inbuilt, but hidden meanings for the community.

As a result of the disappearance of the shield from the Agikuyu, it is possible that several cultural practices have been affected. First, circumcision has moved from a traditionally communal set-up to individualised hospital-based events without any culturally significant get-together ceremonies. Traditionally, the initiation was accompanied by inbuilt rituals and instructions leading to the *maraara nja* (night of vigil).

Second, there is a general loss of responsibility in young men as they lack mentorship which was offered during the circumcision period. Consequently, they are not properly equipped with the relevant socio-cultural knowledge and skills.

Third, the traditional initiation period was an opportunity for building household responsibility and community unity. Young men were taught to be



Picture of *Ndoome* front side and backside. Source: Horniman Museum and Garden, London, UK



This is a great misrepresentation. One of the reasons could be because the Kikuyu word ndoome has no English equivalent and so the use of the nearest similar object which is the shield

responsible members of their families, build solidarity with their agemates and be a support system, and to provide service to the community when called upon to do so. The *ndoome* represented the initiation period not as a moment but as a season of learning amongst young people as they transitioned to adulthood.

Where is the *Ndoome* today?

Outside the Kenyan borders, the *ndoome* as a physical object is housed in museums and private collections. One of the tragedies that has befallen the *ndoome* is a misconception of its identity. Even though the object is part of the traditional costume for the circumcision ritual, it has been classified and stored as a weapon. This is a great misrepresentation. One of the reasons could be because the Kikuyu word *ndoome* has no English equivalent and so the use of the nearest similar object which is the shield, 'Ngo' in Gikuyu, used in war. This kind of mix up has led to the loss of the object's related information.

Conclusion

Ndoome contributed significantly to the well-being of the Agikuyu community. Therefore, with the cultural revival currently taking place in the community, it is imperative that the *ndoome* and other cultural artefacts are returned to the community cultural centres to enhance community identity and promote unity. We believe this will help the community address the challenges in the contemporary world.

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Cultural Restitution in Egypt: Past and Present Legal Frameworks

Mohanad Elsangary

Egypt has over 7000 years of history through the ancient Egyptian dynasties, from the ancient era, the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Numerous civilisations also form an integral part of the country's history, such as Assyrian, Macedonian and Ptolemaic Egypt, as well as Roman and Byzantine Egypt, and Islamic Egypt.

Naturally, a country this rich in history and culture is also rich in artefacts and monuments that produce a wealth of knowledge, art, and unique insight into its exceptional history, and people.

Throughout millennia of colonialism, so many of these priceless items were taken out of Egypt, either by the country's occupier at the time, through smuggling, including local theft of artefacts for sale to foreigners.

The first modern law regulating Egyptian antiquities was issued on the August 15, 1835 concerning the procedures for the protection of antiquities. In its preamble, the decree emphasised the incomparable value of Egyptian antiquities, describing them as the marvels of past centuries. The law stipulated that the Egyptian governmental cabinet decree an absolute prohibition on the export of antiquities in the future.

In March 1869, by-laws for "antiquities items" were issued. These by-laws included regulatory dispositions for excavations to prevent smuggling of Egyptian antiquities. On the March 24, 1874, the antiquities by-law was issued. Provisions of this by-law stipulated that these antiquities, even if not yet discovered or are still unearthened - regardless of their location, are property of the state. Article 34 of this by-law specified that any and all antiquities seized in a smuggling crime were to be confiscated.

Several laws and by-laws were successively issued emphasising prohibition on the export of antiquities and the conferral of protection upon them. For example, the decree of August 12, 1897 contained a stipulation in its second article that the judge had to order - in addition to penalties decreed by the law - that all antiquities in breach of the law were to be returned to the government, meaning restitution.

A law issued in 1912 while Egypt was under British colonial influence (Egypt was only formally colonised by the British in 1914, though Egypt was under British influence from 1882, when British forces occupied it during the Anglo-Egyptian War) also dealt with the issue of smuggling, banning it except through a special license that only the Antiquities Department was entitled to give or deny. More laws were issued in later decades that usually gave some exceptions; these exceptions were sometimes put there or abused by colonial powers to get antiquities out of the country rather than opting to smuggle them out. In 1979, the Minister of Culture issued an important decree, numbered 14 for the year 1979, consisting of a single article stipulating the following:

"Cessation of granting of license to individuals for export of antiquities, irrespective of their source outside the Arab Republic of Egypt."

In 1983, Egypt outlawed the private sale of antiquities and declared that all items of cultural significance and over a century old belonged to the state.

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While there are Egyptians living in precarious circumstances who have helped foreigners obtain pieces of their national heritage, most modern-day Egyptians are infuriated by the open, centuries-long theft of their culture. People who assisted the smugglers were looked down upon in their own communities

It is impossible to estimate with any accuracy the number of antiquities stolen from Egypt over the last few centuries, but it is no doubt massive. There are numerous artefacts that were never even logged or catalogued, found through illegal digs and smuggled abroad. Even reputed archaeologists such as the British archaeologist and Egyptologist Howard Carter, who discovered Tutankhamun's tomb, is now known to have stolen and dealt in numerous artefacts from this tomb and others.

While there are Egyptians living in precarious circumstances who have helped foreigners obtain pieces of their national heritage, most modern-day Egyptians are infuriated by the open, centuries-long theft of their artefacts. People who assisted the smugglers were looked down upon in their own communities, which is a topic discussed in a number of Egyptian films. One notable example is Shadi Abdel Salam's *The Night of Counting the Years*, which features the struggles of a young Egyptian man who lives with his family near mountains holding ancient tombs, and only they are privy to the secret of the location of these tombs. The dilemma he faces is whether he and his family should attempt to profit from this knowledge, or if they should protect their own ancestral heritage.

Unlike cultural sites and antiquities in areas that had a rise in political extremism that posed a danger to them, like the temporary rise of the Islamic State in Iraq for example, the white colonial narrative of 'we only took them to protect them from the locals' doesn't apply to the Egyptian context. Indeed, such a paternalistic argument cannot be justified, regardless, as it would still constitute theft and illegal removal of these artefacts. Egyptian heritage never faced a similar threat, thus this argument is rendered null and void. Even where this flawed argument was applied, antiquities should be returned to their original countries once the threat is gone.

Notwithstanding politics in Egypt, what has remained constant in the past few decades is that different Egyptian governments have been adamant about the protection and restitution of Egyptian cultural heritage. Zahi Hawass, Egypt's former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs, teamed up with 25 other countries in 2010 to press their campaigns to retrieve their stolen antiquities, including those given as "gifts".

Amidst the chaos that ensued after Egypt's 2011 revolution, there were those who used this as an opportunity to steal numerous priceless artefacts from the country. Museums and antiquities warehouses were raided and their content looted, only to quickly end up in the international market, on internet sites, or under the hammer at auctions.

In January 2021, after years of negotiations, the Egyptian government managed to retrieve around 5000 fraudulently acquired items from the U.S. However, most western governments refuse to return priceless historical antiquities to their country of origin. Infamous examples include the *Nefertiti Bust* held hostage in Germany, the British refusal to return the *Rosetta Stone*, among numerous others, irrespective of if they were stolen or 'officially' taken out of the country by an occupying force.

Although the argument that Egyptian heritage is world cultural heritage is true, that heritage should be displayed back home in its birthplace, for the entire world to see and enjoy.

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Morocco's Offer: A 'Museum of the Continent's Culture'

Oumar Baldé

The president of the National Foundation of Museums of Morocco, Mehdi Qotbi notes 'Unlike other countries on our continent, Morocco has not experienced very significant and systematic looting of its cultural property by a colonial power. But we found that it was mainly the work of private individuals who have seized some of our works of art and exhibited them elsewhere.' Mehdi Qotbi is a committed artist-painter, who is well aware of African culture and literature since he has rubbed shoulders with monuments of African literature and precursors of Negritude such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor during his long career. In recent years, King Mohammed VI has chosen him to give a new impulse to the museums of the Kingdom of Morocco.

However, in Morocco, it is known that part of the kingdom's cultural heritage still resides mainly in France, a former colonial power. And in this context, the Moroccan Ministry of Culture has set up a scientific committee in charge of evaluating the works in question. So far, no official report has been made public by this scientific committee. And in the case of Morocco, the looting of cultural artefacts dates back from ancient times to the present. Indeed, Morocco is a victim of a major looting of its cultural artefacts especially archaeological objects, perhaps contrary to the assertions made by Mehdi Qotbi?

25,000 items returned

The country is rich in rare fossil and historical resources that predators come to plunder constantly. The Moroccan government favors co-operation and collaboration with its French counterpart to recover them. In this context, France officially returned nearly 25,000 archaeological objects to the authorities in October 2020.

This returned treasure consisted of paleontological and archaeological fossils, trilobites, teeth, skulls and jaws of animals, arrowheads and cut tools and rock engravings illegally taken out of Moroccan territory. These artefacts come from pre-Saharan and Anti-Atlas sites that date from - 500,000 million years ago and from the Paleolithic and Neolithic times approximately between 6,000,000 and 6,000 years ago.

These objects were seized in France between 2005 and 2006 during three customs controls processes and it took 15 years to return them to Morocco, the time it took to complete all the various procedures, including judicial ones. Among the seized objects were elements that are not only geological but also bear witness to the history of mankind before written records, indicating their value of this cultural heritage.

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For Morocco, African cultural heritage should be promoted at all costs. In this regard, the country is in the process of creating a 'Museum of the continent's culture' whose objective is to highlight the richness of African cultural heritage.

Assistance in the conservation

Mehdi Qotbi calls on the countries of the continent to continue this demand for the return of stolen objects but insists that above all, African museums have to be prepared to receive, safely store and promote these artefacts. 'Yes to the recovery of objects, but everything must be put in place so that they are valued once in Africa. It is necessary to pave the way in terms of equipment and conservation.' Moreover, according to him, Morocco offers to assist its African neighbours in the conservation of recovered objects. In other words, the Moroccan Kingdom offers its museum infrastructure to keep the recovered property until the countries to which they belong are ready to receive them in optimal conditions.

A 'Museum of the Continent's Culture'

For Morocco, African cultural heritage should be promoted at all costs. In this regard, the country is in the process of creating a 'Museum of the continent's culture' whose objective is to highlight the richness of African cultural heritage. This major project is directly inspired by King Mohammed VI, a monarch who is passionately interested in African arts and culture. In the meantime, Morocco museums have implemented a policy which allows for the full enjoyment of art pieces pertaining to its history that are exhibited outside of its borders. Indeed, the National Foundation of Museums of Morocco regularly organizes exhibitions of great artists and authors who have written and made works about Morocco. For example, an exhibition of the works of the French painter and traveler Eugène Delacroix was held in Rabat from July 7 to October 9, 2021. Eugene visited Morocco in 1832 to narrate Morocco through his art and his works are currently conserved in France. This exhibition was the result of a collaboration between the Eugène Delacroix Foundation and the Moroccan Museum Foundation. Officially, it is the result of a partnership and good understanding between the two parties.

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Les algériens attendent le retour du « Canon Baba Merzoug » à Alger après 191 ans de sa déportation en France

Khaled Aboubaker

Les algériens attendent depuis bien longtemps la restitution d'une partie de leur patrimoine culturel et historique déporté à l'époque de la colonisation française (1830 - 1962). Bien que certains biens, dilapidés par l'armée française, ont pu être récupérés après l'indépendance en 1962, il reste néanmoins encore beaucoup d'autres pièces qui sont actuellement exposées dans les musées français. Un travail de longue haleine reste à faire pour rapatrier des biens hautement symboliques, témoins incorruptibles de la civilisation millionnaire algérienne.

L'un de ces symboles qui font l'objet d'un débat actuellement est le "canon Baba Merzoug", fabriqué en Algérie en 1542 et "pillé" par l'armée française, il y a 191 ans (août 1830). Ce fragment du patrimoine culturel et historique de l'Algérie, dont la récupération est considérée par les historiens comme « un devoir national », représente la puissance de la marine algérienne en mer Méditerranée, avant la colonisation, qui est ancrée dans l'imaginaire collectif du peuple algérien.

En effet, Jusqu'à présent, plusieurs voies juridiques, diplomatiques et politiques ont été suivies pour faciliter la récupération du Canon historique. Un « comité national pour la récupération du Canon Baba Merzoug » a été créé et présidé par l'avocate Fatma-Zohra Benbraham. Il a réitéré récemment son appel pour sa libération et son retour à Alger le 1er novembre 2021 (anniversaire du déclenchement de la guerre de l'indépendance en 1954).

Il faut noter également que le Canon historique est exposé depuis 1833 à la Place de l'Arsenal à Brest (France). Il pèse douze (12) tonnes de bronze et mesure sept (07) mètres de long. Il pouvait projeter des boulets à 4.872 mètres.

Des promesses non tenues

Lors de sa visite en Algérie et alors qu'il était en pleine campagne présidentielle, en 2017, le président français Emmanuel Macron, par l'intermédiaire de l'ambassadeur Xavier Driencourt, avait promis la restitution du « Canon Baba Merzoug » à l'Algérie. En outre, en 2020, l'historien français, Benjamin Stora, qui a réalisé un rapport sur la mémoire coloniale de la France en Algérie, avait suggéré la restitution de ce symbole à l'Algérie.

Dans le même contexte, la présidente du Comité national pour la restitution de Baba Merzoug, avait rappelé en août dernier que « des correspondances ont été envoyées au ministre de la défense française. Ces derniers « ont répondu qu'ils ne peuvent rien faire parce que ces correspondances émanent d'une association ». La présidente de cette association estime qu'il est temps maintenant que le président algérien Abdelmadjid Tebboune introduise une demande officielle auprès du président français Emmanuel Macron.

Sur le plan légal, la restitution du « Père fortuné », comme l'appelle les habitants de Brest (France), à Alger devrait être simple, comme le souligne les chercheurs historiens. Car, « ce canon n'appartient à aucun musée de l'armée française ».

Pour qu'un patrimoine appartient à un musée, il doit avoir un numéro d'inventaire, une description de sa fabrication et une datation. Dans le cas du Canon Baba Merzoug, les historiens algériens ont « vérifié tous les registres, et n'ont trouvé aucune description dans les registres des musées français ».

Des gestes non accomplis en France et demi-pas en Algérie

Les débats reviennent toujours sur les questions des mémoires entre l'Algérie et la France. Cela ne s'arrête pas seulement sur les questions de reconnaissance des crimes de guerres, mais les problématiques de restitution des patrimoines « volé » pendant la colonisation font partie de ce débat.

Toutefois, les signes non accomplis sont nombreux. L'hebdomadaire français, Le Point a révélé, en 2020, qu'en décembre 2012, l'Elysée avait « sérieusement » étudié le sujet de la restitution du Canon Baba Merzoug afin « d'offrir un cadeau symbolique de la réconciliation franco-algérienne ». Cela a été évoqué à l'occasion d'une visite d'Etat du président François Hollande en Algérie. Jusqu'aujourd'hui, ce « geste symbolique est enterré ».

Du côté Algérien, les signes de volonté des officiels restent mitigés et ne dépassent pas le seuil de déclarations médiatique ou discours lors des conférences mémorielles. C'est le cas, notamment du ministre des Moudjahidine (Anciens combattants) et des Ayants-droit, Laid Lebigua, qui a affirmé en août dernier, "la détermination" de l'Algérie à récupérer "tout son patrimoine" historique et culturel de l'étranger, en application des engagements du président de la République, M. Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, les autorités algériennes n'ont émis aucune demande officielle aux autorités françaises pour récupérer le Canon Baba Merzoug, malgré l'insistance de la société civile et l'attachement du peuple algérien à cet objet historique, d'une grande valeur symbolique.

Raison de plus, l'historien français, Benjamin Stora, qui a remis un rapport sur la colonisation en Algérie et la guerre d'indépendance a prévu « la création d'une commission franco-algérienne d'historiens chargée d'établir l'historique du canon Baba Merzoug et de formuler des propositions partagées entre l'Algérie et la France, quant à son avenir ».

Pour finir, un membre du comité national pour la restitution du Canon Baba Merzoug a imaginé d'ores et déjà comment l'Algériens vont accueillir ce symbole à son retour dans son pays. « Le retour de notre héros national doit être bien scénarisé: il doit être rapatrié par mer à partir de Toulon, sa première destination en 1830, sur un vaisseau de la marine nationale. Accueilli par les coups de canon et les sirènes des bateaux, des milliers d'enfants, agitant des drapeaux et scandant « Yahia Baba Merzoug », par les youyous des Algériennes, descendantes des valeureuses Dziryettes (Algéroises) qui ont chanté sa protection et par les Algériens, amoureux de leur patrie », dit Smail Boulbina dans une interview au journal El Watan.

Aboubaker Khaled est un journaliste reporter algérien qui a travaillé pour plusieurs médias en Algérie et à l'étranger et est actuellement journaliste pour Maghreb Emergent et Radio M

Baba Merzou Cannon: Algerian's 191 Years Wait

Khaled Aboubaker

Algerians have long awaited the return of a part of their cultural and historical heritage looted between 1830 to 1962 during the period of French colonisation. Although some goods plundered by the French army, had been recovered after independence in 1962, many other objects are still on display in French museums. Complex and long-term work is yet to be done to repatriate highly symbolic items.

One of these symbols, which is currently the subject of debate, is the *Baba Merzoug* cannon, made in Algeria in 1542 and looted by the French army in August 1830 – 191 years ago. This fragment of the cultural and historical heritage of Algeria, the recovery of which is considered by historians as a national duty, symbolizes the power of the Algerian navy on the Mediterranean before colonisation, a narrative that is anchored in the collective imagination of the Algerian people. The cannon made in bronze weighs 12 tonnes and is 7 metres long. It could throw cannonballs to a distance of up to 4,872 metres.

Indeed, to date, several legal, diplomatic and political avenues have been pursued to facilitate the recovery of this historic cannon. A National Committee for the Recovery of the Baba Merzoug Cannon was created and chaired by lawyer Fatma-Zohra Benbraham. On November 1st, 2021 which is the anniversary of the start of the Independence's War in 1954, the committee reiterated its call for the release of the cannon and its return to Algiers. It is important to note that the cannon has been exhibited since 1833 at the Place de l'Arsenal square in Brest (France).

Broken promises

During his visit to Algeria in 2017, while in full presidential campaign mode, French President Emmanuel Macron had, through Ambassador Xavier Driencourt, promised the return of the *Baba Merzoug* Cannon to Algeria. In addition, in 2020, the French historian, Benjamin Stora, who developed a report on the colonial memory of France in Algeria, suggested the return of this symbol to Algeria.

In the same context, the president of the National Committee for the Recovery of the Baba Merzoug Cannon, recalled that in August 2020 correspondence had been sent to the French Minister of Defense whose response was that nothing could be done because the correspondence came from the association. The president of the committee notes that it is now time for the Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to make an official request to the French President. Legally, the return to Algiers of the 'Wealthy Father' (Père Fortuné), as the inhabitants of Brest in France call it, should be simple, as pointed out by historian researchers. This is because, this cannon does not belong to any of the French army museums.

For a heritage to belong to a museum, it must have an inventory number, a description of its manufacture and a dating. In the case of the Baba Merzoug Cannon, Algerian historians checked all the registers, and found no description nor entry in the registers of French museums.

Empty symbolic gestures

The debates around restitution always come back to the question of memories and relations between Algeria and France. This discussion should not focus only on the matter of recognition of war crimes but should also include issues of restitution of assets stolen during colonisation.

However, there are many unfulfilled intentions. In 2020, the French Weekly *Le Point* revealed that in December 2012, the French office of the President – the Elysée had studied the subject of restitution of the cannon and opted to offer it as a symbolic gift of Franco-Algerian reconciliation. This was brought up during a state visit by President François Hollande to Algeria. To date, this symbolic gesture is yet to be made.

On the Algerian side, gestures of commitment from officials remain lukewarm and do not make it past the threshold of media statements or speeches during memorial events. Such is the case, in particular, of the Minister of Veterans (*Mojahedin*) and Right-holders, Laïd Lebigua, who in August 2020 affirmed Algeria's determination to recover all historical and cultural heritage from abroad, in accordance with the commitments of the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Thus far, the Algerian authorities have not issued any official request to the French authorities to recover the cannon, despite the persistence of civil society actors and the attachment of the Algerian people to this object of great symbolic value. All the more reason, the French historian, Benjamin Stora, foresaw the creation of a Franco-Algerian commission of historians responsible for establishing the history of the Baba Merzoug Cannon and for formulating, between Algeria and France, joint proposals concerning the object's future.

In an interview for the *El Watan* newspaper, Smail Boulbina, a member of the National Committee for the Recovery of the Baba Merzoug Cannon, had already imagined how Algerians would welcome this symbol on its return home: 'The return of our national hero must be well scripted: it must be repatriated by sea from Toulon, its first destination in 1830, on a vessel of the National Navy. Welcomed by cannon shots and sirens of boats, thousands of children waving flags and chanting 'Yahia Baba Merzoug', by the ululations of Algeria women, descendants of the valiant *Dziryettes* (ancient Algerians) who sang for its protection, and by Algerian men, in love with their homeland.'

Khaled Aboubaker is an Algerian journalist reporter who has worked for several media houses in Algeria and abroad. He is currently working for Maghreb Emergent and Radio M.

Kiti Cha Enzi: Restoring the Stately Seat to its Former Glory

Trizah Thuku

The Swahili group and culture extended over a large geographical area along the coast of East Africa, from Mogadishu in Somalia to the south of Tanzania. Although astonishingly diverse, the Swahili people were generally brought together by a common language and the shared religion of Islam. The history of this group is deeply linked with trade and the commercial lives of traders from the 10th century. As a result, the material culture of Swahili is reflective of a mix of traditions from diverse groups and cultures. It indicates centuries worth of waning and waxing influence from India, Oman, Portugal, the Bantu and Islamic Middle East. As part of the rewarding trade endeavours on the Indian Ocean, Swahili mercantile populations flourished well into the 19th century. Those elite and powerful resided in sophisticated stone houses and had better access to goods, including ivory, glass, jewellery, magnificently fashioned furniture, spices, ceramics, luxurious textiles and beads.

The Royal Seat

Kiti cha enzi (the royal seat) is approximately dated to the 15th century. The model of this exceptionally stately chair termed the 'chair of power' is unique but most of those in existence are from the 1800s. Large workshops, especially those set up in Lamu Island, specialised in producing these intricate and embellished seats, which were later distributed to the community extensively. During the early 20th century, the seat would be seen laid out in matching duos in wealthy households through the Swahili Coast. Typical to the chair is its outstanding style with a high-back, narrow and upright profile.

Kathleen Bickford Berzock (2006), provides a vivid description of the seat as having been built of finely carved dark hard-wood pieces attached together inconspicuously at points labelled with a scheme of dots and marks for assemblage purposes in case of storage or movement. An ornamental pattern is later developed using a firmly knit string to fill the open spaces on the footrest, back, seat, and lower front. Bone and ivory are also added as superfluties to the triangular pediment. The seat at the British Museum has strung panels in the seat, arms and base. The back and base are decorated with ivory inlays and with openwork panels, pegs and finials also in ivory. The origin of Kiti Cha Enzi is debatable because of the strong resemblance it bears to the 17th and 16th century seats from Spain and Portugal, some of which made it to the East African coast through trade. The chair has also been compared to seats from the Mamluk period in Egypt.

Kiti Cha Enzi is a culmination of centuries' worth of advancements and experimentation in furniture among Swahili. Ideally, these seats were reserved for dignitaries, other important visitors and family members. Needless to say, this seat was not exclusively for the affluent and influential individuals in society. While its most sumptuous and finest versions were limited to the wealthy, the smaller, less embellished versions of this chair were common to lower class members and would be found in thatch- and mud-built houses.

the British made their way into Witu where they made every effort to utterly wreck and destroy the town and its defenses. The chair is said to be the 'State chair of the Sultan of Witu,' Sultan Fumo Bakari who inherited it from his father-in-law, Sultan Ahmed who died in 1889. The chair was 'donated' to the British Museum by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Yet, museums, celebrities and art collectors have pilfered these cultural pieces in the past few years, especially those from the 1800s, donating, selling or auctioning them to other individuals and museums internationally. For quite some time now, the return of this cultural heritage to Kenya has become part of the larger debate on repatriation of Kenyan cultural artefacts housed in foreign institutions. The current discussion on restitution is a conversation partly arbitrated by the International Inventories Programme (IIP), an exhibition and research project that is under sponsorship by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Goethe Institute. This initiative was launched in 2018 and the goal and main objective is to develop a comprehensive inventory of Kenyan artefacts held in public institutions abroad. The National Museums of Kenya is a crucial contributor to this initiative working in union with SHIFT, the German and French collective and The Nest, a Nairobi-based multi-disciplinary collective. While the principal intent is to develop an inventory of stolen items, the project also extends its objective to cover the development of functional relationships between Kenya and the institutions holding those objects.

Housed in the British museum, *Kiti Cha Enzi* is an explicit aide-memoire of the intricate antiquity of transnational trade and subjugation in the Swahili Coast. The seat was acquired from Witu, a traditional Kenyan state. Like many other Kenyan artefacts, the chair at the British Museum was obtained under gruesome circumstances of subjugation of Kenyan communities by the British. *Kiti Cha Enzi* is one of the Swahili items forcefully taken from the Kenyan Coast after the obliteration of Witu, a tragedy that occurred on October 27, 1890. It was taken when the British bombed the Sultan's palace. According to the museum records, the object was acquired by Vice Admiral the Hon. Sir Edmund R Freemantle who spearheaded the attack on Witu. Maarguerite Ylvisaker¹¹ describes that upon landing at Kipini near the mouth of Tana River on the Eastern coast of Africa, the British made their way into Witu where they made every effort to utterly wreck and destroy the town and its defenses. The chair is said to be the 'State chair of the Sultan of Witu,' Sultan Fumo Bakari who inherited it from his father-in-law, Sultan Ahmed who died in 1889. The chair was donated to the British Museum by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. Other royal chairs have been seen elsewhere in foreign institutions including the Art Institute of Chicago and two more have appeared at auctions at Bonhams New York (lot 2359, 13.4.02) and Sotheby's London (lot 378, 13.11.02).

There is excellent history embedded in this particular object that does not just revolve around the traditional skills and techniques needed to make it. It is living proof of an essential aspect of the Kenyan coast that goes back to as early as the 1st century. It is an emblem of historic commercial exchange with Western India and the Persian Gulf, while also an embodiment of conquest by the Omani, British and Portuguese. This blend of traditions grounded new ideas about the symbols of power and authority among the Swahili people.

The Sultan's chair is a symbol of Witu's resistance to all the regimes that made efforts to subdue it, including British and Arab domination during the 19th century. This specific chair should be returned because it denies the Swahili people a part of their history, a remnant of the strong kingdom that was impenetrable to the extent that only canons could be used to gain access. It is crucial that it be brought back to Kenya as a reminder and symbol of the Sultanate that earned a high position of notoriety in the annals of the

¹¹Maarguerite Ylvisaker The Origins and Development of the Witu Sultanate. The International Journal of African Historical Studies, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1978), pp. 669-688. Boston University African Studies Center <https://doi.org/10.2307/217198> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/217198>

Foreign Office and Imperial British East Africa Company, for its unwillingness to surrender to the British.

Details about the chair on the British Museum website indicate that its former owner is a Sultan from Witu. As emphasised many times by advocates of repatriation, African objects should be returned to Africa because they were produced and owned by Africans before they were forcefully taken by the colonisers. *Kiti Cha Enzi* at the British museum should be brought back to the people of Witu simply because it is rightfully theirs. The Swahili people need their history close to them because it can be a source of guidance for their future. Other than this justified entitlement, the repatriation of this object is a potential starting point towards recognising and reconciling the unwarranted treatment that the people of Witu were subjected to in the past.

According to Dr Purity Kiura, Director of Antiquities, Sites and Monuments at the National Museums of Kenya, western museums have chosen to be silent about the repatriation of African cultural artefacts. The usual response is a willingness to temporarily loan these objects to Africa as they are concerned about the impact of mass repatriation since their exhibitions largely constitute African artefacts. The problem worsens as many western museums including the British Museum, brand themselves as 'Universal Museums' which extends their representation to all countries to avoid challenges of artefact ownership. Britain maintains that it is a preserver and custodian of humanity's natural and cultural treasures despite the fact that an object such as *Kiti Cha Enzi* was unlawfully appropriated through colonialism and conquest.

Prof. George Abungu¹² notes that 'Cultural heritage is universal, but it is also unique to cultures and societies. When you take away cultural property, you take away the life and history of a people.'

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¹²Prof. George Abungu is an archaeologist and a former Director-General of the National Museums of Kenya.

Of Scattered Ranks: North Africa Struggles to Recover its Cultural Property

Oumar Baldé

In 2018, when French President Emmanuel Macron commissioned a report on France's restitution of African cultural property, this was written by Felwine Sarr of Senegal and Bénédicte Savoy of France, and it deliberately failed to propose solutions for North Africa. The authors preferred to send this controversial document back to the French authorities, calling for the implementation of a specific law to settle this colonial liability that still weighs on relations between France and its former North African colonies, particularly Algeria. This sufficiently reveals the complexity and peculiarity of the relationship between the former French colonial power and its former North African colonies.

Algeria, the rebel

In North Africa, relations with France vary from one country to another. While for Morocco and Tunisia, the recovery of looted cultural property is being gradually settled with the utmost secrecy, or even with a certain degree of agreement, with Algeria, the arm wrestling and the battle to win public opinion prevails. While with Morocco and Tunisia it is more of a question of cultural objects, with Algeria it is always a question of recovering or returning symbols of war that even the armies of the two countries continue to fight over. The most emblematic case is certainly the 'Baba Merzoug', a cannon seized by the French in 1830, and still on display in the Arsenal square in Brest, France. 'Baba Merzoug' – Lucky Father, had been protecting the harbour of Algiers since the 16th century and in 1830, after the Algiers expedition, it was taken to France as a war trophy. In France, 'Baba Merzoug' is called The Consular.

Instability and looting in Libya

Two other Maghreb countries are less vocal on this subject, namely Mauritania and Libya. The first, a former French colony, has a strong religious and oral heritage. As for Libya, the political and security instability that has plagued the country since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi has been a real boon for looters. Apart from the remote historical sites hidden in the desert, many of the cultural artefacts within reach have been either destroyed or looted. Since the death of Gaddafi, no cultural property has been returned to the country, yet during the last years of life of the late Libyan 'Guide', Italy had begun to return some objects of memory. This was the case during the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's trip to Benghazi in 2008 to apologize for Italy's colonisation. During this trip, he returned to Libya the '*Venus of Cyrene*', a magnificent headless statue 'discovered' in 1913 by Italian archaeologists on Libyan soil.

Few items restituted

However, for all the Maghreb countries, as Abdelati Lahlou, professor of anthropology and museology at the National Institute of Sciences of Archaeology and Heritage in Rabat asserts,

In North Africa, relations with France vary from one country to another. While for Morocco and Tunisia, the recovery of looted cultural property is being gradually settled with the utmost secrecy, or even with a certain degree of agreement, with Algeria, the arm wrestling and the battle to win public opinion prevails.

'...few items have been restituted since the announcement of the French president. As far as cultural heritage is concerned, we note that most of the objects returned to us are not originals. The originals remain in Europe. This means that our European interlocutors do not really want to return the real objects stolen during the colonial period...'

The greatest challenge for North Africa is that the countries of the region are fighting in scattered ranks. With the *de facto* paralysis of the Arab Maghreb Union, their claims are treated on a case-by-case basis, depending on these countries' bilateral relations with their North Mediterranean partners.

Cultural catch-up

In recent years, a number of Maghreb countries have succeeded in developing a real cultural economy, based either on the renovation of old museums, as is the case in Tunisia with the Bardo Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Algiers, or on the construction of new cultural and artistic frameworks, such as the Mohammed VI Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rabat. Although much of their heritage is still outside their soil, the Maghreb countries are trying to catch up with their North Mediterranean neighbors. In this context, it is clear that this trend will eventually compel European countries to feel the need to return the property belonging to the South, because here as well, the need to enjoy art begins to win hearts, after decades of delay in restitution of stolen cultural heritage.

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Egypt's Rosetta Stone: Defacing Histories

Rachael Diang'a and Khaled Mekkawy

Egypt is described by its people as 'The Mother of All Countries', an expression that exists even in the Egyptian national anthem. This phrase implies that the country has an expansive history that extends back centuries, and is arguably located as a cornerstone in the cross-roads of the old world and its civilisations. Due to its numerous occupations, Egypt is a mixture of races and cultures and its various monuments and artefacts can be traced back to an age that tells a story of the Egyptian cultural mosaic.

Rosetta Stone is a stele among many others that can be found in Egyptian temples and tombs. It is 1.14 m in height, 72 cm in length, 27 cm in width, and made of granodiorite. It is inscribed with three versions of a decree – in Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, Demotic script, and Greek script – issued in Memphis in 196 B.C. during the Ptolemaic dynasty on behalf of King Ptolemy V (Epiphanes). Although originally issued in Memphis, it was later discovered in Rosetta, a small village 43 km north of Memphis, and was named after its place of discovery. It was 'discovered' in 1799 by a French soldier, Pierre-Francois Bouchard, during the French expedition to Egypt led by Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1801 it was surrendered to British troops and it is now located in the British Museum in London since 1802.

Two colonial overlords and the birth of antiquities

The colonial history of ancient Egypt includes occupation by the Greeks under Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. and later occupation by the French under Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798 AD. Whereas the Greek intended to merge with Egyptians – Ptolemaic rulers considered themselves Egyptians – the French represented the Euro-centric spirit of imperialism and considered themselves superior to the Egyptians. However, both contributed to Egyptian culture. Under the rule of Ptolemaic dynasty, Alexandria became the center of science and culture in the old world, with a university and library.

French scholars and army who came with Napoleon published the book *Description of Egypt* in 1809 which is a comprehensive catalog of all known aspects of ancient and modern Egypt (i.e. Egypt of 18th century), including its natural history. They also 'discovered' Rosetta Stone in a small village in the Delta region of Egypt called Rosetta (Rashid). In 1822, Jacques Joseph Champollion decoded hieroglyphs where the Arabs had failed, and since then Ancient Egyptian heritage has been a great source of information about Egypt.

The Importance of Rosetta Stone

When the Arab conquered Egypt by 642 A.D., there were two predominant languages in the country. Latin was the official language, spoken by Roman rulers, nobles and Egyptian elite, while Coptic language was spoken by Egyptian Orthodox monks and ordinary people. Hieroglyphs remained an archaic and unknown language as its use had been extinct after the 4th century A.D. Ibn Wahshia, an Iraqi scholar who lived between 9th and 10th

centuries, was the first Arab scholar to admit that hieroglyphs was a language made of letters rather than just symbols used in magic. Egyptian mystic and scholar Zo El-Noon who lived in the 9th century and was brought up in Upper Egypt, claimed that he could read hieroglyphs and tried to put Arab equivalents to hieroglyphs unsuccessfully.

The fact that scripture on the Rosetta Stone was written in Ancient Greek in addition to Egyptian Demotic and Hieroglyphs, helped Champollion decode the hieroglyphic text. When he finished decoding, he found that the message on the Rosetta Stone was exactly the same in the three languages representing three distinct forms of writings. He therefore wrote down the modern European equivalents to its letters. This paved the way to read all writings on ancient Egyptian temples, tombs and papyrus. It further drew a lot of interest in Egyptian culture and history. However, Egyptology dates back to several centuries before Champollion. With the decoding of hieroglyphs, Ancient Egypt spilt out its secrets, although many more are still unknown to the world. Champollion's discovery led linguists to appreciate the Rosetta Stone.

How did the Rosetta Stone Move to London?

When the Europeans invaded Africa, they controlled everything, scorned its civilization, and at the same time stole its cultural artefacts. The French expedition to Egypt is no exception since when they left they took with them many objects. After their surrender to the British army, Menou, leader of the expedition, refused to give the Egyptian artefacts collected by French scholars to the British. After many negotiations, some objects were delivered to the British army, including the Rosetta Stone, as a symbol of British power over the French, although there were many other artefacts were kept hidden by the French.

A British Army General named Tomkyns Hilgrove Turner presented the Rosetta Stone and other antiquities to King George III. The King, represented by War Secretary Lord Hobart directed that these be placed in the British Museum. Hobart and Turner, who were both members of the Society of Antiquaries of London agreed to present the stone to the society before its final deposit in the museum. It has been lying in the British Museum since 1802, except for a brief relocation for safe keeping during the World War I to an offsite underground location. To date, it remains one of the most important artefacts in the British Museum since it marks the beginning of understanding Egyptian hieroglyphics and Ancient Egyptian history and culture.

Return the Loot

The colonial claim of discovering features and artefacts that had existed long before Eurocentric colonisation is common across Africa. Western colonisation meant renaming already existing artefacts as a way of validating the claims of 'discovery' by the imperialists. Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe (initially *Mosi oa Tunya*, *Shungu Namutitima* or *Seongo*) and Lake Victoria in East Africa (initially *Nam Lolwe*) are a few examples of toponymic changes in Africa after colonisation. Even for the Rosetta Stone, the British inscribed themselves into its history by adding the phrase 'Captured in Egypt by the British army in 1801 and presented to King George III.' In Africa, names have immense significance and these 'discoveries' and renaming eroded the cultural significance of the cultural heritage and heightened cultural colonisation. The naming of the Rosetta Stone after the place of its uncovering may not directly have a Eurocentric identity, but it the added inscriptions erode the Stone's aura and stamp upon it a Eurocentric and colonial identity which is unwarranted.

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Many African countries have decried movement of various cultural artefacts to the global North in the colonial aftermath. For Egypt, it is easy to find its monuments in Rome, London, Berlin, Paris, New York. In addition, there are numerous Egyptian objects that are not yet declared. Scholars and cultural activists across the continent have advocated for the restitution of such artefacts for centuries. For the Rosetta Stone, this call for restitution has met hurdles since the British Museum in London considers it one of their most valued cultural artefacts and are therefore not ready to release it. Any museum or private collector would want to be the custodian of this valued stone that opened doors to a more accurate understanding of what is today referred to as Egyptology, a discipline rich in history, culture, and anthropology. On the other hand, Egypt, as the original home and owner of not only the stone itself but also the rich historical, *political*, religious and cultural wealth embedded on the stone, should rightfully have the stone back.

Currently, the Egyptian Government seeks to refresh its historical sites by making them an open museum where one can walk around and feel as ancient Egyptians felt. But cultural colonialism is still an obstacle. This matter should be the priority on the African cultural agenda. Africa is for Africans. African monuments are made by African people on African land in an African atmosphere for African people. They must be brought back.

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The Bunyoro Knife and Scars of Colonialism

Kalundi Serumaga

'The physical boundaries of colonialism are not nearly as important as the outposts they left in the mind.' Narcisse Blood. Native American

Uganda acquired a reputation for producing well-trained doctors and surgeons sometime between the 1950s and the 1980s, and to date, potential candidates are inducted into the Medical School from among the best and brightest science students across the country. At public expense, successful trainees undergo five years of initial training, before proceeding to the National Hospital for two years of internship and an extra three for specialization.

During the turbulent year of the civil war (and the military dictatorship that preceded it), many such trained doctors sought greener pastures abroad. Some willfully violated the then pan-African boycott of apartheid South Africa and travelled there to work as doctors in the Bantustans, while others turned up in regional cities, especially Nairobi. Being a doctor is, or was a particularly prestigious status in Ugandan society. For example, every single Ugandan Vice president in between 1986 and 2011 was a doctor. The previous Prime Minister of Uganda (and long-standing member of the government in one form or another) is also a medical doctor. Uganda's opposition czar Kizza Besigye, and his sister Olive Kobusingye, a government critic, are both doctors.

There's data suggesting that in Uganda in the 1990s, there was one modern medical doctor for every 150,000 rural dwellers, and one such doctor for every 100,000 urban dwellers. At the same time, there was one Native doctor for every 250 Ugandans.

How much more cultural knowledge, historical and contemporary, is held by these people with a much more intimate connection to their communities? How much of that knowledge would be seen as valuable if those native practitioners were also held in the same high regard as their western-style educated counterparts? What impact would an expanded scope of knowledge be regarding the full range of native medical knowledge – as symbolised by the information carried by the existence of the surgical knife from Bunyoro – on the native people's sense of self-worth and confidence?

In his 2016 book *Nudges from Grandfather: Honouring Indigenous Spiritual Technologies* Dr Chris Kavellin points out how western European corporations used 'explorers' to traverse the then 'unexplored' peoples and parts of the world to investigate native medical knowledge.

Great strides

This was of course, also the period of great strides in organic chemistry, especially among German corporations. What basically happened was the reverse engineering of numerous medical compounds and remedies, where European scientists analysed the medicines brought back from the native world. They used their chemistry to isolate and then artificially replicate their vital active ingredients.

The more critical point was that all this harvested knowledge was then patented as the intellectual property of the corporations concerned and sold to the world as 'western' medical knowledge. The descendants of those natives have been paying for access to their own ancestral medical knowledge ever since. Moreover, they have been raised to understand that their own abilities and contributions to medical knowledge have been at best, minimal. To 'do' medicine, is to learn how to do what western experts are teaching, never as an innovator, always as a supplicant, as it were. This implicit separation of assumed roles runs right through the global understanding of the practice of medicine. It forms, perhaps, the basis of how medical knowledge is perceived and taught in the formally colonised spaces, such as Uganda. With such a background, one can see how the information about native surgeries complicates the narrative and the assumed roles assigned to various cultures.

"Dr" Felkin was man who found himself at the very heart of the explorer processes leading up to the eventual creation of what became Uganda, out of the various indigenous nations in the Great Lakes Region.

A biography of him in the British Medical Journal states:

'It was as a pupil at Wolverhampton Grammar School that Robert William Felkin met the explorer David Livingstone, who inspired him with his tales of Africa. And when he met A. M. Mackay, a medical missionary from Uganda, in London in 1877 at the age of 24, he became determined to visit Africa.

By 1875 he had become a medical student at Edinburgh University, but before completing his training, he was sent to Uganda in 1878 by the Church Missionary Society. He travelled up the Nile to Khartoum, where he met General Gordon, and then on through what was then wild and unmapped country to the Great Lakes. There he met Emin Pasha, the Governor of the Equatorial Province, and was presented to King M'tesa, whose personal physician he became in 1879.

When a Muslim anti-missionary movement threatened the lives of his fellow Christians, Felkin warned the King that, should any harm come to them, a great disaster would befall his people. As a sign he foretold that the sun would be darkened; in due course the anticipated eclipse occurred and Felkin was established as a great 'medicine man.' During his stay in Uganda he studied the local diseases and also undertook anthropological measurements of the pygmies. Of particular interest, though, were his studies on childbirth.

In 1880 he returned down the Nile and on to England in the company of envoys of King M'tesa to Queen Victoria. Later that year he returned to Africa, travelling widely but spending most of his time in Zanzibar where he actively campaigned against the slave trade. In 1881 he returned to Edinburgh to complete his medical studies (LRCP, LRCS, Ed, 1884). While still a medical student he became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a member of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and a corresponding Fellow of the Berlin Anthropological Society. As a final year student he gave a lecture to the Edinburgh Obstetrical Society on 9 January 1884 entitled 'Notes on Labour in Central Africa.'² It is from this lecture that the following fascinating account of a Caesarean delivery is taken.'

The account itself is also worth citing in full:

'So far as I know, Uganda is the only country in Central Africa where the abdominal section is practiced with the hope of saving both mother and child. The operation is performed by men, and is sometimes successful; at any rate, one case came under my observation in which both survived. It was performed in 1879 at Kahura. The patient was a fine healthy-looking young woman of about twenty years. This was her first pregnancy ... The woman lay upon an inclined bed...was liberally supplied with banana wine, and was in a state of semi-intoxication. A band of mbuga or bark cloth fastened her thorax to the bed, another band of cloth fastened down her thighs, and a man held her ankles. Another man, standing on her right side, steadied her abdomen. The operator stood, as I entered the hut, on her left side, holding his knife aloft with his right hand, and muttering an incantation. This being done, he washed his hands and the patient's abdomen, first with banana wine and then with water. Then, having uttered a shrill cry, which was taken up by a small crowd assembled outside the hut, he proceeded to make a rapid cut in the middle line, commencing a little above the pubes, and ending just below the umbilicus. The whole abdominal wall and part of the uterine wall were severed by this incision, and the liquor amnii escaped; a few bleeding-points in the abdominal wall were touched with a red-hot iron by an assistant. The operator next rapidly finished the incision in the uterine wall; his assistant held the abdominal walls apart with both hands, and as soon as the uterine wall was divided...the child was rapidly removed, and given to another assistant after the cord had been cut, and then the operator, dropping his knife, seized the contracting uterus with both hands and gave it a squeeze or two. He next put his right hand into the uterine cavity through the incision, and with two or three fingers dilated the cervix uteri from within outwards. He then cleared the uterus of clots and the placenta, which had by this time become detached, removing it through the abdominal wound. His assistant endeavoured, but not very successfully, to prevent the escape of the intestines through the wound. The red-hot iron was next used to check some further haemorrhage from the abdominal wound, but I noticed that it was very sparingly applied. All this time the chief "surgeon" was keeping up firm pressure on the uterus, which he continued to do till it was firmly contracted. No sutures were put into the uterine wall. The assistant who had held the abdominal walls now slipped his hands to each extremity of the wound, and a porous grass mat was placed over the wound and secured there. The bands which fastened the woman down were cut, and she was gently turned to the edge of the bed, and then over into the arms of assistants, so that the fluid in the abdominal cavity could drain away on to the floor. She was then replaced in her former position, and the mat having been removed, the edges of the wound, i.e. the peritoneum, were brought into close apposition, seven thin iron spikes, well polished, like acupuncture needles, being used for the purpose, and fastened by string made from bark cloth. A paste prepared by chewing two different roots and spitting the pulp into a bowl was then thickly plastered over the wound, a banana leaf warmed over the fire being placed on the top of that, and, finally, a firm bandage of mbugu cloth completed the operation. Until the pins were placed in position the patient had uttered no cry, and an hour after the operation she appeared to be quite comfortable. Her temperature, as far as I know, never rose above 99.6°F, except on the second night after the operation, when it was 101°F, her pulse being 108. The child was placed to the breast two hours after the operation, but for ten days the woman had a very scanty supply of milk, and the child was mostly suckled by a friend. The wound was dressed on the third morning, and one pin was then removed. Three more were removed on the fifth day, and the rest on the sixth. At each dressing fresh pulp was applied, and a little pus which had formed was removed by a sponge formed of pulp. A firm bandage was applied after each dressing. Eleven days after the operation the wound was entirely healed, and the woman seemed quite comfortable. The uterine discharge was healthy. This was all I saw of the case, as I left on the eleventh day. The child had a slight wound on the right shoulder; this was dressed with pulp, and healed in four days.'

It is now well known that the erasure of a sense of self is a key requirement of managing a colonised population. But knowledge is also valuable. This is how and why such knowledge is, on the one hand, kept hidden from its native originators, while on the other, taken and built upon by the coloniser for their own purposes. Felkin's observations were an item of genuine scientific interest of a qualified medical officer. He was allowed to observe the procedure without any hostility. This is of course, in the period before the colonial war of conquest in Bunyoro. However, just like the memory of enslaved Africans teaching native African inoculation to white America, this too has been erased in the descendants of the Bunyoro and wider African community. The impact and implications of such erasure are clear.

A brief history of Bunyoro

Bunyoro was an empire that grew around a throne initially created for one kingdom, whose real origins are lost to time. This power may stretch as far back as over 2000 years. Bunyoro's power and influence were not fixed. Based on the Lake now called Albert in the Western Rift valley, its purview reached once as far as Rwanda, Western DRC, Central and eastern Uganda and parts of northern Uganda. It was, without a doubt, the pre-eminent power in the Great Lakes Region. For this reason, Bunyoro became the principal target for either co-option or destruction by the dominant Western European power. As it happened, co-option failed, and Bunyoro became the target of a war of conquest that led to its dismemberment, impoverishment, and cultural erasure.

The "Felkin knife" issue must be understood in this context. It may be hard to say to what extent the carrying away of the knife and its subsequent sequestration was a matter of genuine scientific curiosity and to what extent it was an attempt at erasure aimed at the Africans.

The knife, in a sense, now exists as the only physical evidence left of a whole body of native knowledge that carries several remarkable features.

First, it demonstrates the existence of an African scientific mind. Second, the concept of African medical knowledge expands beyond the notions of "mere" herbalism. Third, it reveals that there was indeed a time in history when at least some aspects of African scientific knowledge in medicine were at par with Western knowledge in the same field. All this serves to complicate notions of the origins and nature of "science", particularly the fixed narrative of African backwardness. As such, it does two things. In the immediate, it offers the chance of contributing to the African sense of self-worth, as part of the overall decolonisation mission that has been identified as central to the rebuilding of the African personality. Second, in the longer term, it offers a path to longer inquiries in the same mission towards the reconstruction of the African contribution to human knowledge. In particular, it opens up the long-standing discussion about the extent to which African communities of the Great Lakes Region (and beyond) descend from the earlier, and much more science-based, civilisations of antiquity based on the African continent, especially Ancient Egypt. Finally, it may help address the challenge of post-colonial trauma as most intensely evidenced in the Bunyoro region itself.

I put these questions to Dr Olive Kobusinye, a surgeon who graduated in 1987 and an author of a popular book analysing the present-day shortcoming of the Uganda public health care system, in which she has always worked. She also carries an intriguing family history. Her paternal grandmother was a renowned native healer whose services were sought after by people from as far west as what is now Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

KS: Based on your own experience and training, how would you rate the caesarian section described by Felkin?

OK: I am not sure about 'rating', but it certainly sounds like a reasonable surgical procedure, very similar to what happens today in some under-resourced centres – save for the anaesthesia and materials used in wound closure. All the ingredients are some form of anaesthesia, scrubbing, operation site preparation, presence of capable assistants, surgical equipment, working with precision, blood loss control, operation site closure, and complete with sutures. Today we use staples – which sound like what they used back then. And when we use non-absorbable sutures or staples, we often remove them in the same staggered fashion that was used here.

KS: How aware were/are you of the existence of this practice, and when did you become aware of it?

OK: I do not recall when I first became aware of this, but after I graduated as a doctor. It might have been while I was training to be a surgeon.

KS: Is this issue taught, or at least referenced, in the training and teaching of Uganda medical doctors?

OK: I do not recall this ever being mentioned during my undergraduate training.

KS: Does the knife in question resemble any similar medical instruments used in medicine today?

OK: The knife looks amazingly like the scalpel used today for skin incisions.

KS: As a teacher, what value would you attach to this article of information, vis a vis your lessons?

OK: I can think of many angles. First, Ugandan students and young doctors should not feel inferior and imagine that their forefathers were clueless about surgical interventions.

Second, we do not always have to look outside for solutions – we can and should innovate. If Ugandans of 100 years ago with no external source of knowledge were able to design tools and develop a surgical procedure of this level of complexity, we should be doing a whole lot more with the abundance of information at our disposal.

KS: Can you see any value in having these instruments (s) involved returned to Africa, Uganda and Bunyoro?

OK: Yes. It is an inspiration. Ugandans have been told that their forefathers were lazy, uneducated, and primitive. Here is evidence to the contrary. But it is also evidence that colonisers were, at times, thieves. I do not know how they can claim any form of decency while still retaining stolen property. We do not see how they used the property they stole. But we can imagine that removing such a wealth of technology would have disrupted development and led to a situation where countries became dependent instead of developing their technologies.

KS: If, and when it has come up as a matter of either teaching or just discussion in the medical fraternity, how would you describe the reactions and attitudes of your colleagues (and students) to it?

OK: I am a member of the Association of Surgeons of Uganda. This type of discussion comes up occasionally. Recently we saw a video clip of some 'traditional surgeon' operating on a patient's head. The instruments were crude at best, and wound closure was inadequate, bound to leave the patient with an ugly scar if the patient lived. Despite these glaring shortcomings, most surgeons were full of praise for the ingenuity of the practitioner. They acknowledged

that if he had benefited from a better education, they would be as good as any neurosurgeon anywhere. There is usually a sense of pride to say, 'look, we do not come from primitive stock, our people knew their stuff'.

KS: You once said to me that your paternal grandmother's work as a native healer has "no bearing" (or similar words) on your own decision to become a medical doctor. Is there any way you can expand on that?

OK: I have been told that my grandmother was a traditional healer of some repute. People traveled distances to bring her, mostly children, for treatment. She used herbs. I learnt nothing from her – I was too young to get involved when she died. My older brother, who also became a doctor would have seen more of her 'practice', but I doubt he wanted to learn about herbs. I think back then, young people did not admire herbalists.

KS: And how do you relate it to more than one medical doctor among her descendants?

OK: I do not know. My father worked as a medical assistant. I have a doctor brother, two nephews are doctors, one niece is a pharmacist, and a younger nephew is heading to medical school. My pharmacist niece never even saw my grandmother – her great grandmother!

KS: This practice seems to blur the line between the popular conception of native medical knowledge as being oriented towards herbal epistemology and the more "modern" concepts of invasive medicine. Have you any thoughts on that?

OK: I have not seen it put quite that way, but I think many examples show that line to be imaginary. Bone setters in this region have existed for perhaps centuries. They might use herbs, but they also work with bones in ways similar to orthopedic surgeons. They stabilise fractures, use splints to immobilise broken bones so that healing can occur, etc. I have been told that other practitioners used hot stones and stone tools to deal with abscesses – performing 'incision and drainage', a procedure that we often do today with neater instruments. Lancing abscesses is an invasive procedure.

I have been told of practitioners using enemas – using pawpaw straws to introduce warm water mixed with pawpaw juice or other herbs to treat constipation and other large gut conditions.

They attempted showed that they had a pretty good understanding of anatomy, and maybe physiology.

Even in 'modern' medicine, we usually treat patients 'conservatively' – with medicines patients take or apply to parts of their bodies. We only use invasive procedures if we cannot treat the condition any other way. The same would have been true with earlier traditional healers.

Take a look at this site (scalpel blade sizes - Google Search). You will see blades that look just like the Bunyoro C-section knife! We mount them on handles and keep changing them.

(Interview with Dr Olive Kobusinye ends)

Meanings

This interview with Dr Olive Kobusinye led to the broader historical-cultural consideration. While there is awareness of this historical knowledge within contemporary Ugandan medical profession, its existence is not central to how medicine is practiced or taught today. There is a sense of pride and a recognition of the value it brings to the question of where Africa may stand in the evolution of debates around African identity. However, this is understood as a question of history, culture and perhaps even politics, instead of being a medical concern.

I was therefore privileged further to be able to engage with a representative of the Kingdom of Bunyoro. Isaac Kalembe Akiiki is the Omutalindwa (Speaker) of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom's (BKK) Rukurato (native Parliament):

KS: How aware were/are you of the existence of this practice, and when did you become aware of it?

IK: I have known about the existence of this practice since 2014 when I was tasked with editing the *Bunyoro-Kitara Journal*. As the editor and chief writer, I embarked on serious research about Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom (BKK), its history, culture and people. In the 2016 edition of the Journal, I wrote an article about this medical achievement entitled, *When Bunyoro topped the world in Caesarean Section practice* (pp26-27). Dr R. W. Felkin's article, entitled *The Development of 'Scientific' Medicine in the African Kingdom of Bunyoro Kitara (1882)*, provides this practice's main literature.

KS: Is this issue taught, or at least referenced, in the public discourse of the Bunyoro Kingdom?

IK: As indicated above, this issue, though not taught in schools (except for medical schools, perhaps), in Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom (BKK), where I work as the Omutalindwa (Speaker) of the Rukurato (Parliament), it is well-documented and discussed. It's a recurrent topic on many fora, especially social media where such pertinent issues are often discussed.

KS: Does the knife in question resemble any similar medical instruments used in Bunyoro native medicine today?

IK: Unfortunately, there are hardly any traditional surgical practices - Caesarean Section, to say the least - in Bunyoro. For the 70 or-so years the British occupied Bunyoro, they discouraged such practices as manufacturing and iron smelting, veterinary medicine, traditional religion, and innovation of any form, among others.

KS: What value can you see in having this/(these) instruments(s) involved returned?

IK: If returned, Bunyoro's surgical knife will not only be a tourist attraction (as an artefact/regalia) in the proposed BKK Museum, but it will spur many young Banyoro to study human medicine, especially surgery. As you might be aware, the Government of Uganda has BKK, a science-based public university, projected to open in 2024.

KS: If, and when it has come up as a matter of discussion in the Bunyoro Kingdom, how would you describe the reactions and attitudes of your colleagues to it?

IK: The issue of Bunyoro's surgical knife, among other artefacts, have been part of BKK's demand for the restitution and reparations of what amounts to injustice and crimes against humanity that were perpetrated by the British and their allies, mainly the Baganda, during the war against Omukama Cwa II Kabaleega (1894-1899) and the occupation until Omukama Sir Tito Winyi and Governor Andrew Cohen signed the Bunyoro Agreement of 1933.

Suffice to say, many of the royal regalia of Omukama Kabaleega and that of his ancestors were looted, and most of it is in the United Kingdom Museum such as Pitt Rivers of Oxford University and other private and government Museums. The Government of Uganda and the United Kingdom should expedite the return of BKK's royal regalia including the Royal throne (Nyamyaro) among other thousands of artefacts looted by the British invading forces commanded by Colville and taken to the United Kingdom and other European countries where they are currently being illegally held as stolen cultural assets.

Isaac Kalembe gave further context to the historical meaning of the artefact that extends beyond medicine and into knowledge production and politics. He explained

how such knowledge would have been part of the knowledge imparted at a university known as Galihuma, that the Bunyoro Empire established in its long pre-colonial era. The site is now a government-owned teacher training college.

‘Indeed, Galihuma was Bunyoro-Kitara University, but not like modern universities. It handled the Runyoro-Rutooro language, culture, traditional practices, etc. This institution existed before European influence in the Great Lakes region (read Bunyoro-Kitara Empire). Kabaleega and his siblings, among others, were graduates of this noble institution.’

He explained further how colonial authorities even took advantage of this knowledge production, by for example, engaging the services of what had been (the now defeated and imprisoned Emperor Kabaleega’s) veterinary doctor called Yaguma, during the rinderpest epidemic of 1903-04, even though Yaguma himself was also in exile outside Bunyoro following the British invasion of his country. Isaac Kalembe also emphasised that the question of the return of artefacts, cannot be separated from the wider question of restitution of the claims to territory lost by Bunyoro to other parts of what is now Uganda – principally the Kingdoms of Buganda and Tooro – as part of the colonial invasion and conquest.

How then should we finally understand this surgical knife? It carries huge meanings within medicine, African history, and Ugandan politics. Just as it was once used to precisely cut open the human body, its very existence now cuts open the hidden mysteries of the history of the African condition. In both cases, it may serve the sacred function of healing and relief.

Kalundi is a native activist, film and television creator, a writer and a researcher focused on questions native restorativity.

Babukusu Claims for Reparation: The Case of Lumboka Massacre of 1894

Mercyline Juma

A substantial amount of Africa's cultural heritage has, for years, resided in public museums and private homes in Europe, the US and Asia, where they have enriched the holders at the expense of the rightful owners. Most of the plundering of these artefacts took place during the slave trade, and the colonial and post-colonial period. They were stolen, taken by force, or given as 'gifts'. The theft of the artefacts is denying African youths the opportunity to know their cultural heritage.

In recent years, the debate on restitution between the West and Africa has been vibrant. European countries, for instance, have gone to great lengths to proclaim 'goodwill' in restitution matters. Unfortunately, there has been more talk than action. The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement strongly indicates that people are finding a correlation between histories of oppression – whether slavery in the US or colonisation by European powers in other parts of the world– and the violence of white supremacy today. To allow the spoils of brutality and coercion to remain outside the African continent is to fail to come to terms with how colonial powers built their wealth on the backs of countries they stole from.

Claims for restitution by African countries was an issue on the table when liberation movements took up arms to fight for their future and self-determination through their political manifestations. This matter was negotiated during the transition to independence in most African countries. In East Africa, claims were lodged to return looted objects and efforts for restitution are yet to be achieved. One atrocious event by the British administration in Kenya was the Lumboka-Chetambe Hills massacre of 1894, where more than 450 men from the Babukusu community were killed. The Babukusu from Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia want to be compensated for lives and properties lost during colonisation.

According to Mr. Simiyu Waswa, a resident from the Lumboka area, colonial administrators and an officer at Nabongo Mumia's office, led an operation to forcefully disarm the Babukusu, claiming that the property belonged to the government.

'The Babukusu resisted this move, and as a result an army of not less than 1200 soldiers marched towards Lumboka. The Babukusu were not only outnumbered in men but also the number of guns. The massacre occurred during the day, at one o'clock, and most of the Babukusu were killed as guns penetrated the stout logs and mud walls of *Olukoba Iwa Lumboka*.'

Mr. Simiyu continues to narrate how the warriors had no option but to fight to defend women, children and property using spears and the few guns they had. warriors fought until darkness fell, then the British and their allies had to re-strategise. The soldiers were split into two groups - the Sudanese contingent

engaged the Babukusu at the front while another led by British generals, attacked at the western gate. The British army had the upper hand owing to their large numbers. Taking stock of their weakened position, the surviving Babukusu took advantage of the cover of darkness and retreated to Chetambe hills. Most of the warriors, men and women were killed and their properties abandoned while others fled from the massacre, dropping their belongings, including household items, agricultural tools, and weaponry. Recollections from William Ansoorge, the British medical officer present at the scene, indicate that objects collected from Lumboka included – 1901.4.141 agricultural bill hook, a traditional hoe known as 'Mukumbeti', 1901.14.2 throwing spear with a metal blade (Kumtati), 1901.16.1 gourd containing native medicine (Emuka), 1901.4.146 large wooden food stirrer (Kumkago), 1901.4.150 armlet of twisted iron (Viviuma) among other artefacts that had cultural importance and significance. The artefacts were collected between August 9 and 22, 1895 and were donated to Pitt Rivers Museum in January 1901.

The Babukusu surrendered and offered a large number of oxen to the Europeans in exchange for peace, but they refused. Those who fled to Chetambe were followed and massacred with their hosts and allies, the Abatachoni. The British and their allies easily tracked the Babukusu, claiming to have followed the people who had conned them of their firearms. At first, the natives could defend themselves from the forts, but a few days later, the British, under the command of General Hobbley, decided to bomb *Olukoba Iwa Abatachoni*. More than 37 Abatachoni and 450 Babukusu men died. With people fleeing from their land for safety and others killed, it means that the Babukusu artefacts and other properties were taken involuntarily or looted, others taken from corpses, burned, and others dropped while running. The Babukusu still have memories of their looted properties and believe these should be returned to their rightful owners.



I advocate for returning these objects to their rightful owners and, where this is not practical, to the community. Both of these parties need to be recognized as stakeholders in the restitution process and should be compensated as required. This will rejuvenate the sense of ownership and protection of cultural property. The Babukusu want compensation for the lives and properties lost during colonisation and the Lumboka-Chetambe war. Speaking to Star Newspaper on January 15, 2016, the Babukusu leader Nixon Kukobo who was behind the calls for reparation, said the community was ready for the task. 'Lives and properties were lost due to the British massacres of the community, yet no compensation has ever been made,' he said. He revealed that the Babukusu needed compensation of Ksh3 trillion since their people were humiliated and killed under colonial administration and those who lost land due to the war ended up as squatters mostly in Trans-Nzoia region of western Kenya where they live in abject poverty.

The process of restitution requires an agenda which encompasses the notion that what is studied did not just occur in the past, and people's right to see their world returned and repaired is justified and ongoing. There is a need to shift the narrative in the global North that Africans do not value their current cultural heritage. Africans place great value on their cultural heritage as symbols of their identity as communities – their language, cultural practices, national symbols and representation. Taking away cultural artefacts denies future generations and scholars the opportunity to learn and grow from their past.

Museums and private collectors can facilitate restitution requests and involve stakeholders such as nation-states, regional or cultural groups and individuals or cultural descendants of makers or owners. There is a need for a legal framework to facilitate restitution to the Babukusu of the pillage from the Lumboka massacre which should include the government through the National Museum of Kenya and should also facilitate research and exhibitions in the community and nation. The injustices against the Babukusu community of *Olukoba Iwa Lumboka* cannot be undone by restitution alone since it does not mitigate the impact of the cultural and societal trauma of colonisation, thus a more comprehensive reconciliation and reparation process should be considered.

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The process of restitution requires an agenda which encompasses the notion that what is studied did not just occur in the past, and people's right to see their world returned and repaired is justified and ongoing.

What Does Restitution Mean in Francophone Postcolony? Reflections from Senegal

Helene Quashie

The restitution debate calls into question the West's production of cultural and historical knowledge about African societies. This paper provides an analysis of how this debate in Senegal is entangled with the ongoing French presence in social, institutional, economic, political and academic spaces and the consequences in relation to local interests for restitution. Focus is placed on what the actors involved do with the idea of restitution, more than it focuses on artefacts per se. Indeed, the return of artefacts reflects the circulation of ideas and of specific actors between Africa and Europe. The paper is a reflection on how the decolonialization movement inspiring restitution highlights mechanisms related to postcoloniality: what does restitution mean in postcolony (Mbembe, 2000)?

Senegal was at the center of French territories in West Africa in many ways and this has shaped postcolonial politics, institutions and everyday life. One result is that Senegal has remained very attractive for migrations from Europe (Quashie, 2018), especially from France. The presence of these Western migrants has not decreased even after the Senegal's independence (Cruise O'Brien, 1972), despite the changed working conditions. They are mostly involved in the mining industry, international trade, construction, international aid, media, tourism, teaching, research and arts. Their social and professional circles now include more individuals of African descent (not only the Senegalese) who have 'returned' from Europe which is a few hours flight away from this continent. Since colonisation, Senegal has been the place to be in West Africa for Europeans, especially French citizens, devoted to African arts and culture.

Implications for the restitution debate in Senegal

Senegalese public museums involved in restitution efforts have to deal with conflicted dynamics. Two of these institutions, one located in the former capital city, Saint Louis and the other in Dakar, have inherited African cultural artefacts looted during colonisation (Bondaz, 2020) and have kept reproductions of some artefacts sent to France (Biro & Thiaw, 2020). Since then, part of their collections have been stolen, sold, destroyed or faked, as in other museums established by the French during colonisation, (Sylla, 2007). A more recent museum has emerged from post-independence history. Its conception originates from the Negritude ideology of the socialist and first president L. S. Senghor, then it was supported by the liberal and third president A. Wade's Renaissance ideology, and its building finally resulted from political relations with China under the fourth and current president,

M. Sall's regime. This museum promotes a Black and Pan-African identity which includes African diasporas, and its collection aims to convey a new way to reflect on historical and epistemological conceptions of Africa and its future. It also refutes the idea that African countries do not possess proper infrastructure to receive and exhibit artefacts returned from the West. However, this museum relies partly on collections of ancient art plundered from several African countries during colonisation or those eventually sold on the culture market. Consequent to, even if a new relational ethics with Europe is expected (Sarr & Savoy, 2018), members of these local institutions have been part of conferences and events which indicate that they cannot escape working with French museums. So far, this situation has facilitated the circulation of artefacts more than their return, as well as the movement of museum directors and researchers between Senegal and France.

Money, politics and changing work scenarios

The logic behind the collaborations above seems to have created a justification for 'development projects' in international aid, where institutions in the Global North frame activities targeted for beneficiaries in the Global South where partners on the ground facilitate local appropriation. Do the artefacts located in French museums need to be accompanied to Africa to be understood and preserved? One can observe the changing scenario as Senegalese museums diversify their partners to include Germany and Belgium, or reject multiple proposals from French individuals, programs and organizations, and host meetings with diasporic or Pan-African networks without French interlocutors. Despite these emerging changes, Senegalese museum curators are more likely to assert that restitution is important but not essential. There are those who advocate for Africa to focus efforts on sustaining the future of contemporary art, and not be held hostage by Europe in their endeavours to reclaim the past. Others focus conversation on the matter of 'authenticity'- for instance, on the question of re-using some artefacts in multiple ceremonies in the community, or substitution of artefacts long gone. These discourses reflect the complexity of the debate on restitution and how it could be influenced by presence of France in postcolonial francophone Africa.

Spouses and privateering in the culture market

The restitution debate also questions activities of French residents in Senegal, most likely to be married to Senegalese women, and run private galleries and museums. One of their narratives is that they have 'brought back' ancient African art to the continent, contending their appreciation and respect for the works, yet they stand against restitution. This argument has to be considered in the context of economics within the culture market in Senegal - these French actors need to sustain profitable activities and can only support an altered narrative of the return of African artefacts. They exhibit and sell those they own, and buy more too as their galleries are situated in tourist areas which attract many European tourists and residents in Senegal. A well-known Senegalese art dealer has worked with local public museums in Dakar, sold them a part of his collections of ancient art and has opened a private museum to exhibit the rest of it. However, this collaboration has remained discreet and exhibitions of his collections are not publicised in the tourist area where his private museum is located. Conversely, French art dealers tend to market their exhibitions of ancient art aggressively, and their activities highlight the global movement of original and copied artefacts from Senegal. Competition between French art dealers is quite common, and apparently, they have no concerns about regulation by Senegalese institutions. French residents in Senegal hold art dealers in high regard. Some dealers have established friendly relationships with members of old, wealthy settler families still living there who

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seek counsel on the return of the original artefacts they bought – whether they should give these back and to whom, considering their connection to the politics and violence in the past.

French collaborators inroads into contemporary art

In the field of contemporary and especially visual art, several of the main French cultural stakeholders based in Senegal appear to be currently in favor of restitution. For example, they have funded Senegalese artists to travel abroad and create artwork related to restitution, and have further supported the restoration of part of the Senegalese film heritage from independence to the present. Since France was a political and cultural partner at that time, this could be seen as part of their own heritage. The rationale related to ‘help’ can be perceived here too. A few European francophone residents (from Italy, Belgium, Switzerland) have associated with French institutions to work ‘for’ the Senegalese society and assert its cultural heritage. Some advocate for the restitution of local archives while another group funds other African artists to create works about restitution for exhibition in Senegal. Then there are those who support exhibitions intended for the annual African Contemporary Art Biennale in Dakar - an event intended for the global market and partly funded by European institutions, and French companies. Activities in contemporary art evolving around the idea of restitution highlight the importance of funding and of its origin. In a liberal world that affects the culture market, money supports ideas and innovations: it can influence the restitution debate if major economic contributions are from France and other European countries.

Educational work around culture and restitution

This influence has also been observed around educational work related to culture. For instance, French associations organize discussions and cultural activities regarding artefacts located in French museums, with high school students in Senegal. Some of these activities include theater skits about the spoliation of local artefacts. In one anecdote, French organizers who came to Senegal refused to be involved in the performances when the students asked them to play the parts of French settlers and ethnologists. This example illustrates the following question: are cultural activities about restitution valuable only as long as French history is not linked to current power relations where French organizations and institutions ‘help’ the process of restitution?

‘Restitution’ a special cachet for scholars

Similar contradictions occur in academia. French scholars have established research programs where one faction would like to collaborate with Senegalese academics while another would prefer to fund local peers to work on restitution without relying on their French counterparts. Shaped by their institutions, western ‘experts’ come with their own way of problematizing restitution in Africa and aim to obtain ‘native’ points of view often without questioning the epistemologies at stake in their methodology and disciplinary formation. French scholars go back and forth - some become residents in Dakar and work in other African countries. It seems that the restitution debate gets a special cachet when it includes Senegal due to its position in the African art market, the history of its ancient art collections and because of its place in the renewal of knowledge production about Africa in the Francophone world.

French scholars come to coordinate investigations about history, artefacts and representations of restitution in Senegal and like other collaborators in culture,

they also fund local artists to produce artwork on this issue. They try to nurture the restitution debate from Africa, as it is saturated and restricted in France. But most of these French academics do not speak any local language and follow then an old way to 'study' Africa from the West (Zezeza, 1997), which contradicts the epistemological perspectives fostered by the idea of restitution. They also present their work in French conferences and publish in French journals and books, which are not always accessible to Senegalese universities and to the people interviewed for their research. These academic practices tend to reflect the way restitution is discussed in France, and entail a colonial rationale where data is collected African 'technicians' and theory elaboration is undertaken by Western 'thinkers' (Mudimbe, 1988). These academic practices do not question positionality, the way to speak of Africa and the international division of scientific labor. Moreover, this research, although conducted in Africa, is labelled as French. In global academia, publications and presentations are recorded publicly by country as units of analysis in scientific worth and rank (Gueye, 2021) and the production of knowledge in Africa remains very low partly because it depends on Western funding and is extracted from the continent.

Simultaneously, several French academics working in Senegal participate in conferences in France hosted and funded by museums still reluctant to support restitution process and which continue to work in a classic ethnological way with their collections. Some of these scholars join other Western conferences, where they speak in the name of the Senegalese society to 'defend' it in the restitution debate, without really understanding its history and social dynamics well. Can becoming an ally to promote the cause of restitution in Africa be confused with the role of leading it?

Other French academics, along with French cultural professionals, criticize local public museums for missing historical perspectives about ancient art collections while refusing to acknowledge that these institutions lack requisite resources including trained staff. Other areas of critique include not opening up their exhibitions to local populations – which the French museums do not do either - and for not pushing the agenda for restitution of some artefacts, to other African countries. Certain French scholars and cultural professionals position themselves in the intra-African aspects of restitution, which can 're-berlinalize' the debate. By speaking in the name of other African countries, they consider the countries they 'support' to have 'more suffered' of cultural dispossession, 'forgetting' that nowadays cultural Senegalese actors and institutions deal with a history they did not participate in. The latter actually demand to discuss with their African peers without any Western interference.

Competing voices in the restitution debate

Finally, a subtle competition is rising within the French cultural circles in Senegal, due to the presence of members of African diasporas, not only from Senegal, who have at least one parent of African descent and were born in France or Europe, and due to the existence of many 'mix couples' (French and African partners). These French citizens of African descent or living with an African resident in the continent, justify the specificity of their voices in the restitution debate by their origins and union. While local members belonging to old 'mixed' Senegalese families (of French and Beninese, Brazilian, Portuguese or Caribbean descent, born out of the slave trade and colonization and which have mingled within the local society) are not the people one hears the most from in the restitution debate. In reality, they may know more about history of looted artefacts than French individuals who are part of current migrations to Senegal and have only a recent connection to Africa. This dynamic implies a process of sub-alternization.

Can becoming an ally to promote the cause of restitution in Africa be confused with the role of leading it?

First, because the living conditions of recent French residents of African descent or married to Senegalese/African spouses do not differ much from the ones of their fellow citizens, they also enjoy social and economic privileges compared to most Senegalese residents and many do not really mingle within the local society.

Second, by thinking they are living in decolonized rapture, they tend to speak in the name of Senegalese and other African communities, asserting their position with nativist narratives (Way, 2017) without checking the 'colonial library' (Mudimbe, 1988) they use. Good intentions do not prevent the reproduction of postcolonial hierarchies, and Senegalese cultural actors have to speak louder for their own voices to be heard. One way to deal with this situation can be perceived when collaborations in contemporary art occur between members of African diasporas born elsewhere in Africa and Senegalese professionals and artists, sometimes meet in the West through diasporic connections. They create fruitful cultural projects with perspectives grounded in Africa – which French residents in Senegal, even though partners of Africans and or of African descent, fail to grasp and to make theirs.

All these dynamics result from social, economic, cultural, symbolical capitals and *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979) nested in long term relations between Senegal and France. Critical narration of history and creative production are not free but trapped within postcolonial contradictions. This may explain why the restitution debate has been mostly discussed so far, by intellectual, cultural and political elite in Senegal and in the diaspora. However, their collaborations do not guarantee the representation of local communities. For example, a few Senegalese intellectuals and academics of the diaspora mention L. S. Senghor's philosophy in the restitution debate. The former president's Negritude ideology (Senghor, 1967) was a tempered political subversion against French colonisation, which later became famous there and appreciated. Despite this, its cultural and political aspects have long been fought against in Senegal (Benga, 2010), as local opposition considered Senghor's ideology as essentialist, elitist and too close to France. Some scholars in the diaspora have also encouraged partnerships with French museums. Others are in favor of reparation more than of restitution and claim for French investment in Senegalese infrastructure for its 'development'. A few local academics agree, but this view contradicts a growing opposition in Senegal, partly led by the urban youth, against the capitalist system underlying the idea of 'development'. Which leads other academics to wonder if the current intellectual elite knows how to engage in constructive dialogue with the youth.

*the youth's silence
about restitution
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Young Senegalese and their perspective on restitution

The Senegalese youth in Dakar, who have a long history of mobilizing around political and cultural issues (Diouf, 1992), have not engaged in the restitution debate. The intellectual elite argues that it may be a matter of education, since looted artefacts have been away from Africa for a long time and their history was not taught at school to be reappropriated by local cultural narratives. However, the youth's silence on this issue could also be perceived as a passive resistance (Bondaz et al., 2012) to the process of heritagization related to restitution. As mentioned by popular hip-hop artists, their silence can be understood as opposition to political arrangements, since only members of the government and elite have so far discussed with French politicians, museum directors and intellectuals about restitution. This problem mirrors the same one in France. Further, members of the subversive youth movements in popular urban culture are known for their renewed support of pan-Africanism and Negritude (Niang, 2011). Third, the youth's silence about restitution may indicate their stand against what Africa represents in Western eyes - cultural artefacts such as masks, regalia,

amulets and statues. These have illustrated the Western view of an 'authentic' and objectified Africa – which is why these artefacts were stolen and later used to regenerate European arts. As a consequence, they might be of little interest in the light of a few local historical outlines.

Colonization in Senegal was organized in a different way, compared to the rest of the French West and Central Africa. Ties with France were closer, and Senegal was conceived as an entrance to the 'real Africa' – this label is still used in relation to tourism originating from Europe. This notion allowed for the plunder of Senegalese artwork while peripheral and southern regions of Africa which presented as more 'authentic' by French settlers and scientists were largely spared from this looting. Collection of the stolen artefacts in Africa and shipping to France was organized from the capital city, Saint Louis, then Dakar. Thus, cultural institutions in urban Senegal have a long history of transforming African cultures into museography (De Suremain, 2007) and of conceiving them through a distanced gaze. Besides, several kinds of artefacts from Senegal located in Western museums have copies which are part of the everyday life, even when they are not used; or their history is still known within families, even if their use is different and relies on other narratives. Copies of stolen artefacts such as masks, statues, regalia and amulets which have become iconic for the restitution debate, can therefore be locally categorized as objects of interest for White people, as traces of the 'colonial library', or as supports for religious rituals normally be kept secret among local communities. These arguments are usually heard when young Senegalese visit exhibitions of ancient art. They imply a refusal to belong to an 'ethnologized society' (Doquet, 1999), meaning that the process restitution should not re-ethnologize the Senegalese society through the return of artefacts which have objectifying symbols in the West.

Restitution and Islamic Heritage

Another aspect of postcolonial entanglements within the restitution debate lies in the growing interest in artefacts related to Islam, from religious elite, intellectuals and scholars in Senegal and in the diaspora, and local students. These artefacts are perceived as a means to question and rethink the historical narrative of Senegal and of Africa and its production of knowledge. Slave trade and colonisation accelerated the spread of Islam, which became a shelter and a means of resistance to French settlers. After independence, while the first governments and Senegalese elite wanted to create a pantheon of heroes for the young nation that excluded Muslims leaders, Islam remained a broadly shared aspect of the local culture (Timera, 2021). Local elite now turn more towards religious figures, artefacts and knowledge (ibid.), which serve political hegemony (Seck, 2021). Therefore, the return of the sword to Senegal in 2019, which allegedly belonged to El Hadj Omar Tall – a religious leader resistant to slavery and colonization – has been presented as a strong symbol (in the elite's words), despite its blurred origin and the difficulty to make it a national symbol since Mali also lays claim to it.

Religious elite among Tall family's descendants expected the return of manuscripts, such as those located in the National Library in Paris. These manuscripts written by El Hadj Omar Tall, question the Western perception of knowledge production in Africa, as French Africanist science often ignored the embeddedness of Islam in local cultures and history (Diagne, Amselle, 2018). The manuscripts of the library of El Hadj Omar Tall have been digitized and partly put online as a goodwill gesture from the French National Library, an action similar to that of British and American national libraries. However, the question of restitution of the manuscripts is not addressed. For intellectuals and scholars in the diaspora, acknowledging Islam as part of the Senegalese and West African cultural heritage contributes to a

historical alternative to the West's narrative about the production of intellectual knowledge in African societies (Kane, 2016). In Senegal, one of the museums related to the restitution debate has organized a specific way of visiting its collections - a room is set aside for ancient art, and the next one, which has welcomed El Hadj Omar Tall's sword, is dedicated to the appropriation of Abrahamic religions in Africa and focuses on Islam in Senegal and in the sub-region. Consequently, local scholars look for other ancient manuscripts through West Africa, such as their peers in Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Mauritania while those working with Senegalese public museums try to find the origins of manuscripts written by Muslims enslaved in North America. This intellectual work seems to join the heritagization of sites and artefacts related to Islam initiated in the 1990's in the ongoing writing of postcolonial national history (Seck, 2010). But this work also implies the need to keep a balance between the valorization of cultural and intellectual history related to Islam, and the history of local communities who fled from this religion and were converted to Christianity by missionaries. French museums keep traces of this second, better known aspect of history with artefacts from South Senegal which might be claimed as well.

The interest in the history of Islam and of local intellectual life remains misunderstood in France and by most French cultural actors living in Senegal. They are more interested in ancient art and in 'ethnic' artefacts which illustrates 'African traditions' to them. The same perspective lies in the promotion of heritage related to the slave trade and colonization, organized by European residents and professionals in Saint Louis: it values 'traditional' know-how but erases the Muslim heritage at the heart of the history of the region (Quashie, 2018). French cultural actors living in Senegal also argued against the return of El Hadj Omar Tall's sword and alerted the French government, fearing that it would encourage Muslim fanaticism in a country they prefer to identify with the cultural philosophy of Negritude by L. S. Senghor. This argument is linked to the representation of Islam in France, which underlies its military involvement against terrorism in the Sahelian region. This war has been referred to by the French Prime minister when returning the sword, and besides the official ceremony, military contracts were signed with the Senegalese government (Seck, 2021).

French individuals and institutions in Senegal, as well as many French of African descent, get involved in the restitution debate with their own understanding of global history, often misreading local history and erasing Islam as part of modernity and (post)colonial nationalism (ibid.). A widely shared conception in France is also that Islam does not reflect 'real Africa'. Can the valorization of Islam in African cultural heritage and in the history of knowledge production support the decolonial perspective called by restitution? Or is this perspective already ongoing? For in Senegal and in the diaspora, Islam has become a popular shield to resist against racialized postcoloniality, political deception, the violence of neo-liberalization and French/Western intellectual hegemony.

Given to these complex dynamics, which Senegalese voices from Senegal will participate in the restitution debate and write its narratives? Can they contribute to the disentanglement of the postcolony?

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Après la restitution: l'objet-patrimoine entre savoir sur le monde et désir de possession

El Hadji Malick Ndiaye

L'objet-patrimoine résultant des collectes coloniales condense plusieurs mémoires, celle de son origine, de la collecte, des discours qui le réinterprètent et du lieu qui l'accueille. Au musée, il est entre la prétention de représenter un pan de l'histoire de l'homme qui l'a façonné (c'est d'ailleurs tout le sens d'*objet témoin*¹ développé par l'ethnologie) et l'impossibilité de rendre compte de cette action dans toute sa plénitude (étant entendu qu'il est découpé de son contexte). Il est pris entre le marteau discursif du collecteur qui le baptise par son récit et l'enclume du musée qui en est le réceptacle et qui le travestit par son discours. C'est dire que l'objet est généré par le vécu du terrain de la collecte et l'espace muséal qui tente une appréhension de l'autre.

La présence de ces objets au musée est passée par différentes formes d'appropriation le plus souvent illégitimes. La moralité de ces collections est douteuse, peu importe les arguments qu'on voudra bien évoquer en exhibant des certificats de vente de l'époque ou des attestations de don. Dans un contexte de domination et de rapport inégal de la force la bonne foi et le consentement sont tout simplement faussés.² C'est pourquoi les demandes de restitution doivent progresser parallèlement à la lutte contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels qui a secondé le pillage colonial en perpétuant l'hémorragie du patrimoine. Cet article est une contribution au débat sur la restitution. Il ne s'adosse pas à une lecture historique des idées ayant nourri le sujet. Il s'agit d'une réflexion qui contextualise le débat sur la restitution - en parallèle d'autres champs énonciatifs - afin de mieux éclairer sa portée sur les objets et les mesures à prendre pour mieux apprécier ces derniers. L'objectif est de jeter un regard prospectif sur le futur pour mesurer l'après-restitution et les défis qui se posent aux objets et aux institutions muséales africaines. Dans les lignes qui suivent, il s'agira d'articuler une pensée qui s'adosse sur la valeur immatérielle des objets et la politique des institutions de sauvegarde du patrimoine.

Patrimoines et nouveaux régimes discursifs

Le débat sur la restitution du patrimoine africain a été pris dans un contexte historique singulier caractérisé par quelques faits dont les pratiques discursives ont eu une portée à dimension planétaire. Les événements consécutifs à la mort de Georges Floyd ont montré la complexité des revendications émanant de plusieurs couches de la population mondiale. Ces aspirations à la liberté et à la justice sociale étaient corrélées au désir de jouissance d'un patrimoine choisi au musée ou dans l'espace public. C'est pourquoi le mouvement relatif au déboulonnement des statues publiques incarnant des valeurs liées au racisme a pu être mené simultanément par des activistes des droits humains, de la liberté d'expression ou de défense du patrimoine.

La « profanation » des statues exprime un refus catégorique de faire passer des idées discriminantes à travers le patrimoine commun à forte dimension mémorielle ou historique. Elle remet en question ce leitmotiv consistant à répéter sans cesse « ça fait partie de notre histoire » au moment même où cette dernière n'est que le fruit d'une sélection bien agencée. Les arguments de cet activisme ne sont pas cloisonnés à un unique secteur de revendication. Ils permettent de jeter des ponts entre des

¹Jean Gabus, *L'objet témoin, Les références d'une civilisation par l'objet*. Ides & Calendes/La Bibliothèque des Arts. Neuchâtel/Paris, 1975.

²Ainsi que le démontre le rapport Felwine Sarr et Bénédicte Savoy, *Restituer le patrimoine africain*. Philippe Rey/Seuil. 2018, p. 22-30.

réalités éloignées et dévoilent de nouvelles lectures sur ce qu'on peut qualifier de dangereuses mémoires ou pratiques.³ Ils bousculent les liens entre mémoire et histoire nous rappelant « que le document d'archive est toujours l'œuvre d'un acteur ou d'un témoin dont l'objectivité est évidemment à interroger ».⁴ Enfin la cause de ce militantisme installe de nouvelles ambiguïtés qui interpellent le métier du conservateur et le poussent à réinterroger les nouveaux défis de sa propre pratique.

Parallèlement au débat sur la restitution, ce besoin de justice et d'équité, dont les discours s'énoncent depuis les lieux de mémoire et de patrimoine, se prolonge dans un désir de renommer les rues portant des noms dont l'histoire est étroitement associée au racisme. C'est dans cette même temporalité que progresse, sans contact direct, le travail entrepris par le Conseil International des Musées (ICOM) d'élaborer une nouvelle définition du musée. Il est bien établi que les catégories conceptuelles ayant façonné les savoirs à l'œuvre dans les musées sont essoufflés et méritent d'être requalifiées. La définition du musée proposée par l'institution internationale regroupant les professionnels de musée date de 2007.⁵

Le musée est une institution permanente sans but lucratif, au service de la société et de son développement, ouverte au public, qui acquiert, conserve, étudie, expose et transmet le patrimoine matériel et immatériel de l'humanité et de son environnement à des fins d'études, d'éducation et de delectation.⁶

La 34^{ème} Conférence générale de l'ICOM tenue à Kyoto le 7 septembre 2019 devant trouver une nouvelle définition consensuelle s'est terminée par un échec. Depuis, l'ICOM a recadré sa stratégie en vue d'obtenir une plus large consultation de tous les comités nationaux. La difficile mission de l'ICOM relative à sa nouvelle définition du musée illustre la diversité des vécus de l'institution muséale qui est à la croisée des chemins. Le musée est transformé par des pratiques et des visions, il est secoué de toutes parts par les réalités culturelles et politiques, et les divers rapports que les sociétés ont avec les collections et les patrimones. Les formations discursives ayant nourri le développement de l'institution muséale ont très peu questionné le contenu des concepts qui ont régi la moralité des objets entrés – par les narrations des Grands récits - dans les musées des anciennes puissances coloniales. Par ailleurs, il est donc tout à fait légitime de réviser la définition du musée tout comme la notion de *collection* muséale qui est le socle sur lequel les musées se sont établis étant donné que les quelques définitions relatives à celle-ci ne laissent rien paraître de leur moralité. Dans les *Concepts clés de muséologie*, la collection est définie comme:

un ensemble d'objets matériels ou immatériels (œuvres, artefacts, mentefacts, spécimens, documents d'archives, témoignages, etc.) qu'un individu ou un établissement a pris soin de rassembler, de classer, de sélectionner, de conserver dans un contexte sécurisé et le plus souvent de communiquer à un public plus ou moins large, selon qu'elle est publique ou privée.⁷

Si dans cette définition, le partage est la condition *sine qua non* des collections muséales, une autre définition spécifie davantage la collection comme un ensemble d'objets « maintenus temporairement ou définitivement hors du circuit d'activités économiques, soumis à une protection spéciale dans un lieu clos aménagé à cet effet, et exposé au regard ».⁸ Au-delà de ces définitions, (partage et exclusion du circuit marchand), la collection pose des problèmes internes au

³James M. Bradburne. « Issues facing the Museum in a Changing World », *Museum 2000. Confirmation or Challenge ?* Swedish Travelling Exhibition, ICOM Sweden and the Swedish Museum Association. 2002, p. 26

⁴Antoine Spire, « La radioactivité du passé », in Christian Derouesné et Antoine Spire, *La mémoire*. EDP Sciences 2002, p. 83.

musée d'ordre éthique et épistémique. Cette institution doit s'interroger sur ce qu'il doit ou ne doit pas collecter, comment le matériel doit être disposé, la relation entre le système de documentation et le type de recherche, sur les acquisitions, la survivance des documents et la biographie des collectionneurs.

Selon Susan Pearce, les collections explorent notre relation humaine à travers une part physique de notre monde. Les objets sont liés à nous par des relations complexes dans lesquelles l'idéologie occupe une place importante. Donc la collection, dans son acquisition, son organisation et son évaluation constitue une part importante de notre effort pour construire le monde.⁹ C'est dire que la collection est intimement liée à notre désir de connaissance car les objets qui en sont les différentes unités sont perçus comme les indices des cultures ou du moins les témoins. « Cependant, le terme de témoin peut avoir ici un double sens. L'objet est témoin parce qu'il dit quelque chose de son monde d'origine, en l'occurrence de sa culture d'origine. Il est, de par son existence et sa nature d'indice, à la fois détenteur d'une connaissance et porte d'entrée sur son contexte d'origine».¹⁰

L'objet n'exprime pas une simple matérialité, mais traduit des savoirs endogènes, de mémoire multiples, le geste des rituels et la trace de quelques corps. Ces différentes formes de sensibilités, parfois contradictoires, expliquent le difficile rapport que les musées à dimension ethnographique entretiennent aujourd'hui avec le passé et l'histoire. Vestiges d'un modernisme qui procédait d'une double posture d'identification et de mise à distance, ces musées ont façonné une conscience historique dont l'ambiguïté informe les contradictions du présent débat sur la restitution du patrimoine africain.

Le caractère individuel de l'objet pris isolément ne le prive pas du fragment de savoir qu'il peut détenir au regard de la collection tout entière. Cependant, si en se résorbant dans la collection qui le contient il ne perd pas son autonomie, c'est surtout grâce à l'inventaire qui a la double faculté d'individualiser tout en globalisant. L'esprit de l'inventaire renvoie à la classification, à l'ordre et à l'organisation. L'inventaire nous permet d'avoir une méthode de travail qui autorise un suivi de l'objet. Il réunit la matérialité de la chose et les fonctionnalités de celle-ci. En cela, il donne tout d'abord les premiers indices du savoir tiré des objets selon l'orientation typologique qu'il laisse entendre ou que sa méthode permet de mettre en relief. C'est dire qu'au-delà de son simple aspect technique, l'inventaire des collections coloniales fut le premier socle d'une classification idéologique des sociétés colonisées. Toutefois, vu au niveau global de la collection, l'inventaire n'est pas seulement un geste anodin de consignation scientifique ou de conservation administrative d'artefacts relevant de la propriété d'une institution ou d'une personne. Il est un outil de gestion qui permet de comprendre la nature des collections, la rareté de certains objets ou les faiblesses de l'entité.

Connaissance de l'objet et trafic illicite

La façon dont l'inventaire renforce la gestion des connaissances des objets est visible dans l'exemple du musée Théodore Monod. Les objets inventoriés avaient chacun une fiche sur laquelle étaient répertoriées toutes les caractéristiques de la pièce. Derrière cette fiche, était généralement dessiné l'objet en soit (fig. 1). Dans ce dessin, la vérité d'après nature était recherchée suivant une longue tradition du rapport entre dessin et science qu'il importe de considérer dans le processus même d'identification des savoirs encodés dans les objets. « Coexistant parfois avec les préceptes et les pratiques de l'objectivité mécanique, s'y opposant parfois, la vérité d'après nature continua au cours des XIXe et XXe siècle à s'attacher la loyauté de scientifiques et même de disciplines entières».¹¹ Mais le dessin était aussi un support d'interprétation des objets collectés car à l'instar des paléontologues qui peaufinaient leur spécimens

⁵« Le musée est une institution permanente sans but lucratif, au service de la société et de son développement, ouverte au public, qui acquiert, conserve, étudie, expose et transmet le patrimoine matériel et immatériel de l'humanité et de son environnement à des fins d'études, d'éducation et de délectation ».

⁶Statuts de l'ICOM adoptés lors de la 22^{ème} Assemblée générale à Vienne (Autriche) le 24 août 2007.

⁷André Desvallées et François Mairesse in *Concepts clés de muséologie*, ICOM, Armand Collins, p. 26

⁸Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux, Paris Venise XVIe et XVIIIe siècle*. Paris, Gallimard, 1987

⁹Susan Pearce, « Collecting reconsidered », in Susan Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collection*, Routledge, 1994, p. 194. (193-204)

¹⁰Jean Davallon, « Les objets ethnologiques peuvent-ils devenir des objets de patrimoine ? », *Le musée cannibale*, Marc-Olivier Gonseth, Jacques Hainard, Roland Kaehr, (éd.), Musée d'ethnographie Neuchâtel, 2002, 174.



fig. 1



fig. 2

jusqu'à montrer non l'objet mais ce qu'il aurait pu être, les dessinateurs du fichier descriptif avaient un rapport particulier aux objets dessinés provenant des collectes ethnographiques.¹² Ce qui semblait important à relever était surtout les particularités qui fondaient la singularité de l'objet. Le fichier descriptif va beaucoup évoluer car les dessins seront remplacés par des images photographiques. Le passage du dessin à la photo était l'occasion de rapporter des éléments externes qui entourent et accompagnent la compréhension du patrimoine.

Dans ces dessins, les objets du patrimoine sont la matérialisation d'un système de calcul qui prend en compte l'ingéniosité des artistes et la connaissance à l'œuvre dans l'univers mental des créateurs. Considérons par exemple les nasses de pêcheurs de différentes formes et divers styles, ou les techniques de tressage de la vannerie qui sont des fractales ingénieuses. Ces dernières sont aussi visibles dans les métiers du tissage qui illustrent des codes et des signes (fig. 2). Les pièges pour oiseaux ou pour rongeurs qui matérialisent des constructions sophistiquées sont des instruments adaptés à des écologies et au service d'un développement durable. Si le patrimoine africain a été écrémé et que le meilleur est parti, on peut supposer que restituer une diversité de ces objets dans les communautés et les musées en Afrique, serait exposer un savoir susceptible de diversifier la proposition des arts et de l'artisanat local, d'enrichir l'Histoire de l'art et combler des trous dans la mémoire collective. Ainsi, nous devons considérer que ce qui doit revenir au cours de la restitution, ce n'est pas la matérialité des objets, c'est aussi les archives qui les accompagnent, les technologies dont ils témoignent et les savoir-faire à l'œuvre dans leur corps.

Face à la nécessité d'un retour de ces connaissances tissées dans le patrimoine africain, force est de constater que les véritables défis ne concernent pas nécessairement la construction d'institutions muséales car plusieurs pays africains réalisent actuellement des avancées dans le domaine. Les prochains défis doivent se concentrer d'une part sur la lutte contre le trafic illicite et d'autre part sur le rapport au numérique dont la pandémie de COVID 19 a montré le retard accusé par la majorité des institutions africaines. En effet, dans le cadre du débat sur la restitution, la problématique du trafic illicite a

¹¹Lorraine Daston et Peter Galison. *Objectivité*, Les presses du réel, 2012, p. 130.

¹²*Op.cit.*, p. 92. 97. 99. 100. 105.

paradoxalement occupé une partie infime s'il n'a pas fait l'objet d'une amnésie totale. Or, ce phénomène continuera de s'imposer tristement après les restitutions comme il l'a par ailleurs été après le pillage colonial.

Dans cet ordre d'idées, c'est d'abord l'inventaire qui permet d'établir une cartographie exacte des ressources et constitue également un premier verrou contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels, même si ce verrou est à posteriori, c'est-à-dire après la sortie de l'objet. La numérisation, quant à elle, favorise une lutte contre le trafic illicite en permettant aux musées d'avoir davantage de traçabilité des collections qu'ils conservent. Par ailleurs, elle est un moyen efficace pour la conservation du patrimoine culturel, car elle donne lieu à une meilleure appréhension des plus infimes spécificités des artefacts à sauvegarder. La numérisation traduit une autre relation qu'il est possible d'établir avec la collection et avec son histoire. En outre, elle permet de mieux établir des relations de partage et d'échange autour de ces objets, car elle sera dans un futur proche le principal outil de collaboration scientifique et culturel entre les institutions d'étude et de conservation du patrimoine.

Si la pandémie de COVID-19 a révélé le retard sur le numérique accusé par le musée Théodore Monod, ce dernier se place néanmoins au milieu d'une réflexion dense contre le trafic illicite. Plusieurs rencontres ont été organisées au musée parmi lesquelles celle du 18 au 20 juillet 2017. Cette rencontre du bureau régional de l'Unesco fut l'occasion de développer une réflexion commune autour du phénomène dans la sous-région. Elle a permis de revenir sur les catégories de biens culturels les plus menacées, sur les circuits ainsi que les cartographies du trafic et sur les dispositions juridiques qui sont dans l'ensemble peu efficaces dans plusieurs pays. Par ailleurs, le musée a collaboré avec le bureau régional de l'Unesco pour établir le livret *Protéger les biens culturels contre le trafic illicite en Afrique de l'ouest et du centre* (fig. 3). Ainsi, sur la base de critères fixés par le musée et ceux fournis par l'ICOM, une première liste de biens a été établie en mettant l'accent sur des pièces ayant une valeur importante sur le marché. En cédant les droits de publication des images à l'UNESCO, le musée a permis à cette dernière d'imprimer ce livret très utile pour les professionnels, les étudiants ainsi que les forces de défense et de sécurité (douane, gendarmerie, police etc.).

Grâce à l'histoire de ses collections, le musée Théodore Monod est identifié par les acteurs comme un creuset de réflexion et d'échanges sur les questions relatives à la sauvegarde du patrimoine. C'est d'ailleurs la raison qui a motivé Felwine Sarr et Bénédicte Savoy à choisir ce site pour organiser la première rencontre sur la restitution du patrimoine, tenue le 12 juin 2018 dans le cadre de la mission confiée par le président Emmanuel Macron. Elle a réuni une vingtaine de participants d'Afrique et d'Europe et a posé les premières questions sur l'état des collections et la responsabilité des conservateurs au regard de la restitution du patrimoine. C'est au cours de cette rencontre que le galeriste bruxellois Didier Claes a informé le musée détenir une pièce dont il avait la certitude qu'elle provenait des collections du musée. Il s'agissait d'un masque-heaume Mende de Sierra Léone, porté par les femmes lors de cérémonies rituelles (fig. 4). Sorti des collections du musée dans les années 1980, le masque a transité en Aquitaine avant de rejoindre la galerie de Didier Claes. La cérémonie de restitution a été organisée le 5 décembre 2018 et le masque a pu réintégrer les collections du musée Théodore Monod.

Conclusion

Dans le cadre du débat sur la restitution, il est urgent d'une part, de réinstaurer les valeurs immatérielles de l'objet liées aux connaissances endogènes, d'autre part, il convient de relier ce débat à la lutte contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels. Car, force est de constater que les failles existent malgré tous les efforts consentis par les Conventions et les organisations qui luttent contre le trafic illicite des biens culturels : l'Office des Nations unies contre la drogue et le crime (ONUDC), l'Organisation



fig. 3

¹³Convention concernant les mesures à prendre pour interdire et empêcher l'importation, l'exportation et le transfert de propriété illicite des biens culturels.

¹⁴UNIDROIT : Institut international pour l'unification du droit privé est installé à Rome (Italie)



fig. 4

internationale de police criminelle (INTERPOL), l'Organisation mondiale des douanes (OMD), le Conseil international des musées (ICOM) qui s'ajoutent aux Convention de 1970¹³ et de 1995 d'UNIDROIT¹⁴ sur les biens culturels volés ou illicitement exportés. Le processus de restitution du patrimoine culturel doit nécessairement s'accompagner d'un sérieux diagnostic des mesures contre le trafic illicite dans la région Sahel. En effet, dans des pays comme le Sénégal, le Mali, le Burkina Faso, la Mauritanie, le Niger le cadre administratif et institutionnel contre le trafic devra être renforcé. Le renforcement des cadres normatifs couplés aux politiques critiques d'inventaire et de numérisation permettront de relever les défis de la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain.

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After Restitution: The Heritage Object Between Knowledge of the World and Desire for Possession

El Hadji Malick Ndiaye

The heritage object resulting from colonial collections encapsulates several memories: that of its origin, of the process of its collection, of the discourses that reinterpret it and of the place that hosts it. In the museum, it finds itself between the claim to represent a part of the history of the man who shaped it (this is in fact the whole meaning of *witness object*¹⁵ developed by ethnology) and the impossibility of giving a fully comprehensive account of this action (being understood that it is cut out of its context). It is caught between the discursive hammer of the collector who baptizes it with his story and the anvil of the museum that is its vessel, which distorts it with its discourse. This is to say that the object is generated by the experience of the field of its collection and by the museum space which tries to apprehend the Other.

The presence of these objects in the museum has gone through various forms of appropriation, most often illegitimate. The morality of these collections is questionable, no matter what arguments one might evoke by showing ancient sales or donation certificates. In a context of domination and an unequal balance of power, good faith and consent are quite simply skewed.¹⁶ This is why the demands for restitution must continue simultaneously with the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property, which aided the colonial looting by perpetuating the hemorrhage of heritage. This article is a contribution to the debate on restitution. It does not lean on a historical reading of the ideas that have nourished the subject. This is a reflection that contextualizes the debate on restitution – in parallel with other indicative fields – in order to better illuminate its impact on the objects and the measures to be taken to enhance their appreciation. The objective is to take a prospective look at the future in order to assess the post-restitution, and the challenges facing African objects and museum institutions. In this paper, we will be articulating a thought that builds on the intangible value of objects and the policy of heritage safeguarding institutions.

Heritage and new discursive regimes

The debate on the restitution of African heritage has been caught in a singular historical context characterized by a few facts whose discursive practices have had a global dimension. The events following the death of George Floyd have shown the complexity of the demands emanating from several layers of the world population. These aspirations for freedom and social justice were correlated with the desire to enjoy a chosen heritage in the museum or in the public space. This is why the movement that led to the dismantling of public statues embodying values linked to racism could be owned simultaneously by activists for human rights, freedom of expression or the defense of heritage.

¹⁵Gabus J. 1975. *L'objet témoin, Les références d'une civilisation par l'objet*. Neuchâtel/Paris : Ides & Calendes/La Bibliothèque des Arts.

¹⁶As demonstrated by the Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy (2018) report *Restoring the African heritage*. Philippe Rey / Seuil. (p.22-30)

The desecration' of the statues expresses a categorical refusal to pass on discriminating ideas through common heritage with a strong memorial or historical dimension. It challenges this constantly repeated leitmotiv of 'it's part of our history at the very moment when it becomes clear that the latter is but the result of a well-organized selection.

The “desecration” of the statues expresses a categorical refusal to pass on discriminating ideas through common heritage with a strong memorial or historical dimension. It challenges this constantly repeated *leitmotiv* of “it’s part of our history” at the very moment when it becomes clear that the latter is but the result of a well-organized selection. The arguments of this activism are not compartmentalized to a single sector of demand. They make it possible to build bridges between distant realities and unveil new readings of what can be described as dangerous memories or practices.¹⁷ They question the relationship between memory and history, reminding us ‘that the archival document is always the work of an actor or a witness whose objectivity is certainly to be questioned.’¹⁸ Finally, the cause of this activism sets up new ambiguities which challenge the profession of the curator and push him to re-examine new challenges of his own practice.

Along with the debate on restitution, this need for justice and fairness, whose discourse is framed by memory and heritage, extends itself to the desire of renaming the streets that bear names whose history is closely associated to racism. It is in this same time frame that the International Council of Museums (ICOM) continues, without direct contact, its work on developing a new definition of the museum. It has become evident that the conceptual categories that have shaped knowledge at work in museums are faltering and deserve to be reclassified. The definition of a museum proposed by the international institution bringing together museum professionals dates from 2007:

‘A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.’¹⁹

The 34th ICOM General Conference held in Kyoto on September 7, 2019, which was to find a new consensual definition, ended in failure. Since then, ICOM has reframed its strategy with the aim of securing wider consultation of all National Committees. The difficult mission of ICOM relating to its new definition of the museum illustrates well the diversity of experiences of the museum institution, which finds itself at a crossroads. The museum is transformed by practices and visions, it is shaken from all sides by cultural and political realities, and the various relationships that societies have with collections and with heritage. The discursive formations that nurtured the development of the museum as an institution have hardly questioned the content of the concepts that governed the morality of the objects entered – through the narrations of Great Stories – into the museums of the former colonial powers. Furthermore, it is therefore quite legitimate to revisit the definition of the museum, as well as the notion of *museum collection*, which is the foundation on which museums were established, given that the few definitions relating to it do not touch on the issue of their morality. In *Key Concepts of Museology*, the collection is defined as:

a set of tangible or intangible objects (works, artefacts, mentefacts, specimens, archival documents, testimonies, etc.) that an individual or an establishment has made an effort to collect, classify, select, store in a secure context and most often to communicate to a wider or smaller audience, depending on whether it is public or private.²⁰

If, in this definition, sharing is the *sine qua non* condition of museum collections, another definition specifies the collection rather as a set of objects “kept temporarily or permanently outside the circuit of economic activities, subject to special protection in an enclosed place furnished for this purpose, and

¹⁷Bradburne J.M. 2002. “Issues facing the Museum in a Changing World”. *Museum 2000. Confirmation or Challenge?* Swedish Travelling Exhibition. ICOM Sweden and the Swedish Museum Association. (p. 26)

¹⁸Spire A. “La radioactivité du passé”. In Derouesné C. et Antoine Spire A. 2002. *La mémoire*. EDP Sciences. (p. 83)

¹⁹ICOM Statutes adopted at the 22nd General Assembly in Vienna (Austria) on August 24th 2007.

exposed to the gaze.”²¹ Beyond these definitions (sharing and exclusion from the commercial circuit), the collection poses internal problems for the museum, problems of an ethical and epistemic order. The institution must question itself on what it should or should not collect, how the material should be arranged, the relationship between the documentation system and the type of research, on the acquisitions, the survival of documents and the biography of collectors.

According to Susan Pearce, the collections explore our human relationship through a physical part of our world. Objects are linked to us via complex relationships, in which ideology takes up an important amount of space. So the collection, in its acquisition, organization and evaluation, is an important part of our effort to build the world.²² This means that the collection is intimately linked to our desire for knowledge because the objects are perceived as clues or, at least, witnesses of cultures. ‘However, the term witness can have a double meaning here. The object is a witness because it says something about its original world, in this case, its original culture. It is, by virtue of its existence and its nature of a clue, both the holder of knowledge and the gateway to its original context.’²³

The object does not express a simple materiality, but translates endogenous knowledge, multiple memories, the gesture of rituals and the traces of a few bodies. These different forms of sensibilities, sometimes contradictory, explain the difficult relationship that museums with an ethnographic dimension have today with the past and with history. Remnants of a modernism which proceeded from a double posture of identification and distancing, these museums have shaped a historical consciousness whose ambiguity informs the contradictions of the present debate on the restitution of African heritage.

The individual character of the object observed in isolation does not deprive it of the fragment of knowledge that it may hold with regard to the entire collection. However, if by being absorbed into the collection that contains it, the object does not lose its autonomy, it is above all thanks to the inventory, which has the double faculty of individualizing while globalizing. The spirit of the inventory refers to classification, order and organization. The inventory allows us to have a working method that allows tracking of the object. It brings together the materiality of the thing and its functionalities. In this, the inventory first of all gives the first clues to the knowledge drawn from the objects according to the typological orientation that it suggests or that its method allows to highlight. In other words, beyond its simple technical aspect, the inventory of colonial collections was the first foundation for an ideological classification of colonized societies. However, seen at the general level of the collection, the inventory is not just a trivial act of scientific recording or administrative conservation of artefacts that are the property of an institution or a person. It is a management tool that helps to understand the nature of the collections, the rarity of certain objects or the weaknesses of the entity.

Knowledge of the object and illicit traffic

The way in which the inventory strengthens the knowledge management of objects can be seen in the example of the Théodore Monod Museum. The inventoried objects each possessed an index card on which were listed all the characteristics of the object. Behind this card, generally was the object itself drawn (Fig. 1). In this drawing, the truth according to nature was sought following a long tradition of the relationship between drawing and science, which must be considered in the very process of identifying the knowledge encoded in objects. ‘Sometimes coexisting with, and sometimes opposing, the



fig. 1

²⁰Desvallées A. & Mairesse F. *Key Concepts of Museology*. ICOM/Armand Collins. p. 26 (original in French)

²¹Pomian K. 1987. *Collectionneurs, amateurs et curieux, Paris Venise XVIe et XVIIIe siècle*. Paris : Gallimard.

²²Pearce S. 1994. “Collecting reconsidered”. In *Interpreting Objects and Collection*. Routledge. (pg. 193-204)

²³Davallon J. 2002. “Les objets ethnologiques peuvent-ils devenir des objets de patrimoine ?”. In Gonseth M.O., Hainard J., Kaehr R. (eds.). *Le musée cannibale*. Musée d’ethnographie Neuchâtel. (p.174.)

precepts and practices of mechanical objectivity, according-to-nature truth continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries to hold the loyalty of scientists and even of entire disciplines.²⁴ But the drawing was equally a support for the interpretation of the objects collected because, like the paleontologists who fine-tuned their specimens to show not the object but what it could have been, the illustrators of the descriptive files had a particular relationship to drawn objects from ethnographic collections.²⁵ What seemed important to reveal were above all the peculiarities that formed the basis of the object's uniqueness. The descriptive file will evolve significantly because the drawings will be replaced by photographic images. The transition from drawing to photography was an opportunity to report on the external elements that surround and accompany the understanding of heritage.

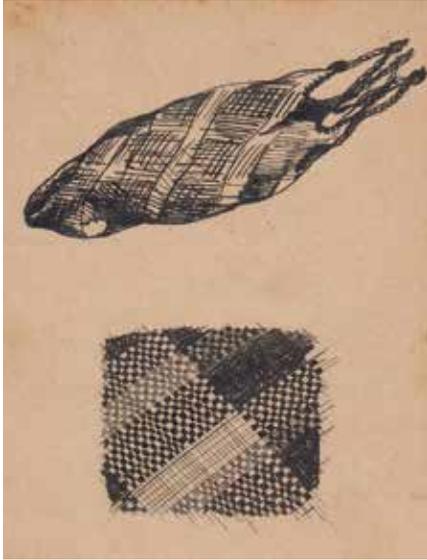


fig. 2

In these drawings, the heritage objects are the materialization of a system of calculation which takes into account the ingenuity of the artists and the knowledge at work in the mental universe of the creators. Consider, for example, fisherman's traps of different shapes and styles, or basketry braiding techniques that are ingenious fractals. The latter are also visible in the weaving looms which illustrate codes and signs (Fig. 2). Traps for birds or rodents which materialize sophisticated constructions are instruments adapted to their respective ecologies and in the service of sustainable development. If African heritage has been skimmed off and the best parts taken away, we can assume that restoring a diversity of these objects to communities and museums in Africa would expose a knowledge likely to diversify the offer of local arts and crafts, to enrich the history of art and fill in the gaps in the collective memory. Thus, we must consider that what needs to come back during the restitution, is not the material objects, but also the archives which accompany them, the technologies to which they testify and the know-how at work in their bodies.

Faced with the need for a return of this knowledge woven into African heritage, it is clear that the real challenges do not necessarily refer to the construction of museums, since several African countries are currently making progress in the field. The next challenges should focus on, on the one hand, the fight against illicit traffic, and, on the other hand, on the digital transformation, an area in which, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, the majority of African institutions are behind schedule. Indeed, within the framework of the debate on restitution, the problem of illicit traffic has paradoxically occupied a minuscule place, if not become the victim of total amnesia. However, this phenomenon will sadly continue to occur after the restitution, as it has otherwise occurred after the colonial looting.

In this sense, it is first and foremost the inventory that makes it possible to establish an exact mapping of resources and, hence, constitutes a first barrier against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods, even if this barrier is a *posteriori*, that is, after the object is taken out. Digitization, on the other hand, promotes the fight against illicit traffic by allowing museums to increase the traceability of the collections they keep. Moreover, it is an effective means for the conservation of cultural heritage, because it gives rise to a better understanding of the tiniest specificities of the artefacts to be safeguarded. Digitization reflects another relationship that can be established with the collection and with its history. In addition, it makes it possible to strengthen sharing and exchange relationships around these

²⁴Daston L. & Galison P. 2012. *Objectivité*. Les presses du réel. (p. 130)

²⁵*Op.cit.*, p. 92. 97. 99. 100. 105.

objects, because, in the near future, it will be the main tool for scientific and cultural collaboration between institutions of study and of conservation of heritage.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the delay in digital technology assumed by the Théodore Monod Museum, the latter nevertheless positions itself in the midst of a dense reflection against illicit trafficking. Several meetings were organized at the museum, including the one from July 18 to 20, 2017. This meeting hosted by the UNESCO Regional Office was an opportunity to develop a common reflection on the phenomenon in the sub-region. It made it possible to re-evaluate the categories of cultural property most at risk of trafficking, the traffic circuits and maps, as well as the legal provisions which are generally ineffective in several countries. In addition, the museum collaborated with the UNESCO Regional Office to produce the booklet *Protecting Cultural Property from Illicit Trafficking in West and Central Africa* (Fig. 3). Thus, on the basis of criteria set by the museum and those provided by ICOM, an initial list of goods in danger has been drawn up, with the emphasis on items with significant market value. By ceding the publication rights of the images to UNESCO, the museum has enabled the latter to print this very useful booklet for professionals, students, as well as the defense and security forces (customs, police, etc.).



fig. 3

Thanks to the history of its collections, the Théodore Monod Museum is identified by stakeholders as a melting pot for reflection and discussion on issues relating to the safeguarding of heritage. This is the reason that motivated Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy to choose this site when organizing the first meeting on the restitution of African heritage, held on June 12, 2018, as part of the mission entrusted to them by President Emmanuel Macron. It brought together over twenty participants from Africa and Europe and framed the initial questions on the state of the collections and on the responsibility of curators with regard to the restitution of heritage. It was during this meeting that the Brussels gallery owner Didier Claes informed the museum that he had in his possession a piece he was sure came from the museum's collections. It was a Mende helmet mask from Sierra Leone, worn by women during ritual ceremonies (Fig. 4). Taken from the museum's collections in the 1980s, the mask passed through the Duchy of Aquitaine before finding itself at Didier Claes's gallery. The restitution ceremony was organized on December 5, 2018 and the mask returned to the collections of the Théodore Monod Museum.



fig. 4

Conclusion

Within the framework of the debate on restitution, it is urgent, on the one hand, to reinstate the intangible values of the object linked to endogenous knowledge, and, on the other hand, it is necessary to link this debate to the fight against the illicit traffic of cultural goods. Because, it is clear that the loopholes exist despite all the efforts made by the Conventions and the organizations that fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which all deal with the matter in addition to the 1970²⁶ and 1995 UNIDROIT²⁷

Conventions on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects. The process of restoring cultural heritage should without failure be accompanied by a serious diagnosis of measures against illicit trafficking in the Sahel region. Indeed, in countries such as Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger, the administrative and institutional framework against trafficking will have to be strengthened. The strengthening of normative frameworks accompanied with critical inventory and digitization policies will allow us to appropriately address the challenges of restoring African cultural heritage.

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²⁶Convention concerning measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the import, export and illicit transfer of ownership of cultural property.

²⁷The International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) has its headquarters in Rome (Italy).

La France refuse de restituer ses butins de guerre déportés d'Algérie

Khaled Aboubaker

La question relative à la restitution et le rapatriement des œuvres d'arts, faisant partie du patrimoine historique et archives d'avant la colonisation française de l'Algérie, reste sans réponse depuis plusieurs années. Pourtant, des voies d'associations, chercheurs, historiens et responsables de la culture en Algérie s'élèvent pour exiger leur retour au bercail, à chaque rendez-vous mémoriel.

En effet, parler dans certains cas d'objets volés et déportés par les français reste un tabou en Algérie, mais également en France. Ce sujet est assimilé à chaque fois au refus de la France coloniale de reconnaître ses crimes contre l'humanité commis en durant sa colonisation en Algérie (1830-1962).

C'est aussi ça l'histoire des 300 œuvres d'arts qui appartenaient au Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Alger et déportés en France en Avril 1962. Dès les premiers mois de l'indépendance, des négociations ont eu lieu entre les deux pays et certains œuvres ont pu être ramenés à Alger en 1969. Pourtant, des chercheurs ont révélé que « la collection de 159 tableaux et 136 dessins d'art français qui est rapportée à Alger en décembre 1969 est fort différente de l'inventaire de l'époque d'Alazard ».

L'Algérie n'est pas concernée?

Le débat sur le passé colonial de la France est toujours attaché au continent africain. La France officielle ne reconnaît toujours pas ses crimes, encore moins le nombre hallucinant d'objets patrimoniaux et œuvres d'arts pillés dans ses anciennes colonies.

En novembre 2018, le président français, Emmanuel Macron, s'est engagé à restituer les biens culturels rapportés des pays africains. Cet engagement du président, nouvellement élu à l'époque, s'est basé sur un rapport réalisé par les deux universitaires Bénédicte Savoy et Felwine Sarr.

Les deux chercheuses ont recensé plus de 90.000 œuvres africaines conservées dans des collections publiques françaises. Pour autant, les collections recensées ne concernent pas l'Algérie.

Il faut dire que les obstacles juridiques, d'une part et le laxisme des autorités culturelles algériennes, d'autre part, se dressent devant le retour des biens dont l'Algérie a été dépouillée par la France. Ce sont les raisons, généralement invoquées par les chercheurs, vu la complexité de leur référencement.

Par ailleurs, le rapport remis par Felwine Sarr et Bénédicte Savoy précise que

« Sur le territoire africain, le cas de l'Algérie (qui a fait l'objet d'intensives négociations dès les années 1960 et donné lieu à d'importants mouvements de restitution ou de dépôts à long terme après l'indépendance) et le cas de l'Égypte (qui

s'inscrit dans une logique d'exploitation multilatérale des richesses du pays par plusieurs États occidentaux), bien que présents dans les collections publiques françaises, relèvent de contextes d'appropriation et impliquent des législations très différentes du cas de l'Afrique au sud du Sahara. Ces cas devront faire l'objet d'une mission et d'une réflexion spécifiques. » (page 02).

La conquête de l'Afrique a-t-elle commencé en 1885?

Toutefois, si on ne retrouve pas grand-chose sur l'Algérie dans le rapport réalisé par Bénédicte Savoy et Felwine Sarr, c'est par ce que le recensement des dizaines de milliers d'objets volés d'Afrique commence seulement en 1885. Alors que le grand pillage des biens et patrimoine culturel et historique avait commencé dès juillet 1830.

Le chercheur algérien, Dr Mourad Betrouni, chercheur au Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Anthropologiques et Historiques avait pointé du doigt cette méthodologie.

« Nous ne voyons pas, dans ce rapport, la place de l'Algérie qui, entre 1830 et 1885, a constitué le champ d'élaboration conceptuelle, méthodologique et institutionnelle de la pratique du sac, du pillage, de la dépossession et du trafic illicite des biens culturels. C'est, indubitablement, forte de cette expérience algérienne de plus d'un demi-siècle, que la colonisation française a pu investir les nouveaux territoires africains conquis. Il ne pourrait, donc, s'établir un diagnostic sur la question, qui outrepassse cette phase essentielle de l'histoire de l'Afrique: 1830-1885, ce « chaînon manquant » du processus préconisé par nos deux universitaires, sans lequel toute approche objective est biaisée ».



Photo from Allan Donovan collection: Paul Ekhaba

La France ne peut-elle pas se détacher de ses butins de guerre?

Depuis son indépendance le 05 juillet 1962, l'Algérie réclame son patrimoine volé ou déporté par le colonisateur français. En 2012, le président français, François Hollande, avait annoncé la restitution des « clés d'honneur de la ville d'Alger que le dey Hocine vaincu en 1830 avait été contraint de remettre au maréchal de Bourmont ». Ces pièces historiques du n'ont jamais été remises à l'Algérie jusqu'aujourd'hui et se trouvent toujours au Musée de l'armée, à Paris.

C'est le cas également pour le Canon Baba Merzoug, qui a fait d'une demande en 2013 pour un retour express à Alger. Jusqu'à présent, le Canon orne toujours la place de la ville de Brest et aucune confirmation quant à sa restitution prochaine n'émane des autorités françaises.

Du Musée du Louvre au musée des antiquités d'Alger?

C'est très révélateur quand on visite le Musée algérien du Louvre. Ce lieu particulier du plus grand musée du monde, créé en 1845, contient des « collections algériennes les plus spectaculaires ».

Enfin, la question qui reste posée, même probablement dans les esprits des visiteurs de Louvre: pourquoi ces œuvres historiques et biens culturels ne sont pas exposés dans les musées de leur pays d'origine? « C'est problématique de devoir retirer au musée du Louvre », comme le dit la spécialiste Zahia Rahmani, d'autant plus, il n'est pas envisageable pour la France officielle de se séparer de ces butins coloniaux, dont elle est fière. Même si dans le cas de l'Algérie, la demande de restitution concerne quelques œuvres précises.

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France Refuses to Return its Spoils of War from Algeria

Khaled Aboubaker

The question relating to the restitution and repatriation of works of art, forming part of the historical heritage and archives before the French colonisation of Algeria, has remained unanswered for several years. However, the voices of associations, researchers, historians and those responsible for cultural institutions in Algeria are rising at each memorial meeting to demand their return to the homeland. In fact, in some instances, talking about objects stolen and transported by the French remains a taboo in Algeria as well as in France. This subject is usually incorporated within France's refusal to recognise its crimes against humanity committed during the colonisation of Algeria (1830-1962).

A case in point is the 300 works of art that belonged to the Museum of Fine Arts in Algiers that were stolen and transported to France in April 1962. From the first months of Independence, negotiations took place between the two countries and some of the works of art were brought back to Algiers in 1969. However, researchers have revealed that 'the collection of 159 paintings and 136 French art drawings, which was returned to Algiers in December 1969, is significantly different from the inventory of the 'Alazard era'.'

Algeria is not concerned?

The debate on France's colonial past is still linked to the African continent. France still does not officially recognise its crimes, much less the staggering number of cultural heritage artefacts looted in its former colonies. In November 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron pledged to return all cultural property stolen from African countries. This commitment from the President, newly elected at the time, was based on a report developed by two academicians – Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr. The two researchers identified more than 90,000 African works of art preserved in French public collections. However, the collections listed do not include those from Algeria.

It must be noted here that legal obstacles on one hand, and the laxity of the Algerian cultural authorities on the other, stand in the face of the return of the artefacts that Algeria was stripped off by France. These are the reasons generally cited by researchers, given the complexity of their referencing. In addition, the report submitted by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy²⁸ states that '*On the African territory, the case of Algeria (which was the subject of intensive negotiations from the 1960s and gave rise to significant movements of restitution or long-term repositories after Independence) and the case of Egypt (which is inscribed in a logic of multilateral exploitation of the country's wealth by several Western states), although present in French public collections, relate to different contexts of appropriation and involve legislation very different from the case of Africa South of the Sahara. These cases should be the subject of a special mission and debate.*' (p. 2)

Did the conquest of Africa begin in 1885?

However, if we do not find much about Algeria in the report produced by Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr, it is also because the census of tens of thousands of objects stolen from Africa only begins with 1885. And yet, the great looting of cultural and historical objects and heritage had begun as early as July 1830. The Algerian researcher, Dr. Mourad Betrouni, based at the National Centre for Prehistoric, Anthropological and Historical Research had pointed out the shortcomings of this methodology.

'We do not see, in this report, the place of Algeria which, between 1830 and 1885, constituted the field of conceptual, methodological and institutional drafting of the practice of sacking, looting, dispossession and illicit trafficking of cultural property. It is undoubtedly, on the strength of this Algerian experience of more than half a century, that French colonization was able to position itself in the later conquered African territories. It is not, therefore, possible to establish a diagnosis of the matter, while omitting this essential phase of the history of Africa: 1830-1885, this 'missing link' of the process analyzed by our two academics, without which any objective approach remains biased.'

Can't France give up its spoils of war?

Since its Independence on July 5, 1962, Algeria has been claiming its heritage, which was stolen by the French. In 2012, French President François Hollande announced the return of the 'honorary keys to the city of Algiers that the Dey²⁹ Hocine, defeated in 1830, was forced to hand over to Marshal de Bourmont.' These historic keys have not been returned to Algeria until today and remain at the Military Museum (*Musée de l'Armée*) in Paris. The same is the case of the *Baba Merzoug* Cannon, which was, in 2013, the subject of a request for an urgent return to Algiers. Up to date, the Cannon still adorns the town square of Brest and no confirmation of its imminent return has been given by the French authorities.

From the Louvre to the Algiers Museum of Antiquities?

It is very insightful to visit the Algerian Louvre Museum. This singular place of the largest museum in the world, created in 1845, contains 'the most spectacular Algerian collections.' The question that remains unanswered, probably even in the minds of visitors to the Louvre is, *why are these historical works and cultural goods not exhibited in the museums of their country of origin?* As specialist Zahia Rahmani puts it, 'It is problematic to have to withdraw anything from the Louvre,' and the government of France cannot consider parting with these colonial spoils, which it is proud of. Even if, in the case of Algeria, the request for restitution concerns a few specific objects.

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It is very insightful to visit the Algerian Louvre Museum. This singular place of the largest museum in the world, created in 1845, contains 'the most spectacular Algerian collections.' The question that remains unanswered, probably even in the minds of visitors to the Louvre is, why are these historical works and cultural goods not exhibited in the museums of their country of origin?

Impediments to Africa's Push for Restoration of its Cultural Artefacts: The Case of Nigeria

Rachael Diang'a and Olakris Akinola

In this article we explore the various attempts and challenges faced in returning the cultural artefacts stolen from Nigeria during the colonial period. This article analyses issues that not only Nigeria, but Africa as a whole need to grapple with as they engage in the reparation discourse.

"In Europe their beauty and sophistication caused an instant sensation, and they are widely regarded as amongst Africa's greatest artworks" (Phillips, 2021).

In an 1897 event which is yet to be officially labelled as grand theft, the British military force looted an innumerable number of bronze and ivory carvings, and thousands of metal sculptures from the Benin Kingdom in West Africa – today Nigeria. To date, these items sit in several notable museums in cities in the global North.

The looting of a defeated peoples' cultural heritage in wartime remains common practice since ancient times. The process of returning these looted artefacts to their countries of origin is referred to as repatriation. Over the years, several attempts have been made to repatriate these artefacts but such efforts have been grossly ineffective. However, according to reports by Barnaby Phillips (2021), in recent years, European governments have come under pressure to atone for colonial-era crimes, and some have spoken of their desire to return these items.

In April of 2021, there was an indication that the German government would return hundreds of Benin Bronzes, widely regarded by Phillips (2021) as 'some of Africa's most famous artefacts' with sundry museums in the United Kingdom releasing similar statements of intention. The return is expected to signal an extraordinary moment in Africa's post-colonial history. However, in recent years, disputes amongst Nigerian leaders are beginning to jeopardise this repatriation process.

Generations after the 1897 theft, Omonoba Ewuare II, the great-great grandson of the Oba who was violated by the British, summoned 'all well-meaning people' to an emergency meeting in the Edo capital of Benin City in mid-2021. Clad in the ancient-tailored regal royal apparel, and after his praises had been rendered, the Oba of Benin warned the teeming Benini indigenes, well-wishers and the press, of an attempt by what he called an 'artificial group' to 'divert' the return of the artefacts. Reportedly, this group, Legacy Restoration Trust (LRT) has the backing of Edo State Governor, Mr Godwin Obaseki, who allegedly had arranged to put the Bronzes in an Edo Museum of Western African Art (EMOWAA). The Oba was clear in his position, that the right and only legitimate destination for the Bronzes would be a Benin Royal Museum, domiciled within the King's Palace. The monarch further insisted that the Bronzes had to come

back to where they had been taken from, and that he was the custodian of all the cultural heritage of the Benin Kingdom. Although the Oba's concern and declaration were well-founded, his own Kingdom was already divided, as his son, designated heir and Crown Prince, Ezelekhæ Ewuare, was present at the board meeting of the LRT as was the federal government representative of Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments.

Persuaded of the necessity for repatriation of African artefacts, Governor Obaseki of Edo State, formerly, Benin Kingdom has convinced a celebrated architect, Sir David Adjaye, to design the new museum which promises positive international publicity to the repatriation project. The Oba of Benin now warns anybody dealing with the LRT that they do so 'at their own risk and against the will of the people of the Benin Kingdom.'

At the moment, and in what again appears reminiscent of indirect-rule, Phillips (2021) reveals that the British Museum has signed a deal with the LRT for an archaeology project in Benin City, while the German government is discussing doing the same, and further funding an LRT building to initially house the returned Bronzes. More than a repatriation of stolen artefacts, it appears the individuals are more concerned or interested in the financial gain from the process. According to the reports, 'these contracts are worth millions of dollars, especially because British and German officials, as well as other Europeans, embraced the Trust in part because they believed it and the Oba were working together' (Phillips, 2021).

Rather than making concerted efforts into cooperation in order to rectify historical injustices, individuals are allegedly more interested in financial gain, either from the Bronzes themselves or the contracts around a new museum. Disheartening reports from Phillips (2021) reveal that 'the University of Aberdeen in Scotland said earlier that its museum would give back a Benin Bronze head unconditionally. But in the wake of recent events the museum's director, Neil Curtis, said that he would be very uncomfortable if this return occurred without agreement among all parties in Nigeria.' According to the German government official, '...those who think there's money to be made from this new museum are mistaken. A museum is somewhere you spend money, you don't make it' (Phillips, 2021).

Nigeria's federal government has legal responsibility for the return of any Benin Bronzes and, says it will ultimately 'take possession' of them although the Oba's supporters stress he will never concede on the question of ownership. In any case, the clash of interests do not appeal to supporters and proponents of restitution of artefacts. An Edo historian involved in discussions with European museums told Phillips that the dispute between the Oba and the governor had sent a chill through all of them (Phillips, 2021).

In the colonial aftermath, the exploitation of Africans happened in virtually all parts of the continent. The present discourse about this need for restitution stretches beyond the usual confines of academia and other research spaces, it spans beyond the agenda for human rights and cultural activists, into the spaces of rumour-mongering and commonplace talks. It is so widespread since it has become significant in our day to day lives. One of the key points this discussion is anchored on is the fact that these artefacts were stolen and as a continent economically and politically hinged on the outside world where 'big brother' calls the shots, Africa's ability to successfully make headway in this discussion is compromised. There are myriad challenges that go way beyond the stolen artefacts themselves.

As said earlier, this plundering took place across the continent and the artefacts are scattered across the Northern hemisphere. To strongly articulate and demand for the return of the objects, African nations must speak against this cultural atrocity with one voice, and stand its ground. However, if the people and states of Africa speak with different voices and divisions remain visible, the 'divide and rule' approach remains applicable in controlling the continent and denying them their rightful property, decades after political independence. When articulating such issues, there is no room for infighting, collaborations with 'big brother' or fence-sitting. African leadership must take a clear position and demand for the return of Africa's cultural heritage. It takes unity to do this.

Viewing the plunderer as a 'Big Brother' and santising the plunder that occurred, leads to euphemisms that only work against the resolve to firmly and unequivocally demand for the return of the stolen goods. Poverty, guilt owing to poor governance, and misuse of public resources and corruption, are some of the impediments to African leaders taking a bold stand against these perpetrators of crimes against humanity. When a part of our cultural heritage is plucked off and placed in a location far away from its cultural context, it loses its meaning. Its significance to the community that produced and valued it is fully eroded. The 'Big Brother' syndrome compounds Africa's challenges in making an unyielding demand for the restitution of these cultural artefacts, since Africa is a beneficiary gaining from 'Big Brother' through funding, grants, humanitarian and other development aid. The desire to keep these fringe benefits coming results in the use of euphemistic language. So, the problem of reparation for Africa goes beyond the artefacts, who took them out and where they should be returned. It is intertwined with who the accused is, and who calls the shots in the global arena.

Power-play is at the centre of this debate as it takes the shape of a cold war. It is about who is in control, and how much he can manipulate the offended to get away with plunder. It is clear, for example, that political independence was released on one hand while the other hand, well tucked behind the torso, held tightly onto many other valuables, including socio-cultural emancipation, economic control, and a stolen cultural heritage. Keeping these artefacts in their current foreign locations has consequences relating to custodianship. These artefacts drive traffic into the museums, raises the profile as well as ensuring monetary gain for the museums based on the variety of their collections.

The fact that these artefacts are under foreign custodianship is a marker of their disconnection from their legitimate owners taking away their meaning and function from everyday life. Every cultural item, be it tangible or intangible, gains its full meaning and usefulness within their cultural space. Any form of disjunction from this space causes a disruption that affects full understanding of the artefact, and its people's understanding of themselves, especially in the context of their original cultural roots. This is reason enough for anybody in leadership on the continent to spearhead a conversation and engage in the agency of restitution of cultural artefacts.

There is a whole generation of Africans who may not see the need for this return. They never knew about these artefacts, were never aware they existed, never saw nor experienced them, and as such, may never see the reason to engage in this discussion. This is the direst impact of the delayed

restitution. Cutting off a generation from its scions only exposes it to the cultural vulnerabilities that come with this kind of cultural dislocation.

There have been orientalist arguments that traditionally, African culture is anchored in oral tradition, meaning that its various elements and pieces are generally transmitted within and across generations orally. This essentialist and orientalist thinking posits that a real African museum exists within the individual or a community therefore allowing cultural meanings to be handed down to younger generations seamlessly. However, that problematic argument falls short of the realities in the continent – to begin with, large swathes of written histories, including Egyptian hieroglyphics, are part and parcel of the looted cultural artefacts lining the halls of Western museums and private collections. Further, there is a generation of African peoples that is largely disconnected from its recent past history. A generation that cannot speak indigenous languages and are fast outgrowing the need for such languages. This is what happens in the absence of physical contact with one's cultural roots and the artefacts that embody this.

Even though the discourse has for long revolved around tangible objects, we expand the discourse and consider the vast human resource and the intangible material that enables exportation of Africa's cultural knowledge through graduate scholarships and studies that end up in academic museums – (libraries) in the West.

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Efforts and Gains in the Restitution of Ethiopia's Cultural Heritage

Shiferaw Tadesse

The journey of restituting the looted and illegally obtained cultural treasures of African countries is arduous, and remains complex and challenging despite slow progress and irregular gains on the continent. Yet, Ethiopia has been stepping up efforts to reclaim and restore their looted cultural heritage. In November 2020, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism officially established a National Heritage Restoration Committee comprising 20 members. The move is believed to buttress previous efforts at the national level as well as by different bodies and individuals that have indeed helped the restitution and restoration of pillaged properties, including the recently returned 19th century braid of hair from Emperor Tewodros II, who killed himself during the British invasion of Ethiopia in 1868.

Cultural artefacts stolen from the African continent have made huge museum collections in destination countries, in most cases without recognition of their origin. Apart from being deprived of the treasures' social and economic benefits and values, looting of cultural heritage causes gaps between generations in the countries of origin.

Some scholars contend that despite the loss of enormous treasures across time, Ethiopia, which has never been colonised, has relatively been in a better position to preserve and defend their heritage from the pillage that other African countries have experienced due to colonisation. Treasures from Ethiopia have been plundered and taken out of the country through different means, most of which occurred during two separate historic occasions. One was during the British military expedition at the battle of Maqdala in 1868, and second, during the five-year Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941.

According to historians, the greatest looting happened during the Battle of Maqdala, in north-west Ethiopia, when the Emperor Tewodros II fought against the British military expedition led by General Robert Napier. Association for the Return of the Maqdala Ethiopia Treasures (AFROMET), an international organisation dedicated to retrieving the plundered treasures, sees the looting there as a major loss. Historians state that the pillage from Maqdala was transported on fifteen elephants and almost two hundred mules, to the nearby Dalanta Plain, before their eventual deposit in various British institutions. The treasures include an infinite variety of crosses made of gold, silver and brass, as well as heaps of parchment royally illuminated, crowns, a royal cap, a golden chalice, and Talbots, or altar slabs. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church emphasises that tens of thousands of treasures had been looted by the British troops.

Diplomatic efforts for restitution

Concerted efforts have been made to preserve and prevent possible loss of cultural artefacts. Ethiopian officials and experts have emphasised the need for continued work to restore stolen treasures, including those artefacts plundered before coming into effect of the UNESCO 1970 Convention³⁰ that provides a common framework for prevention and restitution.

Desalegn Abebaw, Cultural Heritage Inventory, Grading & Inspection Director at Ethiopia's Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH), which is mandated in prevention, restitution and restoration of cultural heritage in the country, reiterates the complex nature of restitution of cultural heritage. In addition to the massive pillaging of treasures at Maqdala, Desalegn says that Ethiopia lost cultural artefacts during the Italian occupation, through illegal activities of individuals and illicit trading. In addition to Britain, there are many other destination countries for Ethiopia's stolen heritage.

Desalegn traces the earliest restitution efforts to Emperor Yohannes IV, the successor of Emperor Tewodros II. He protested in 1872 to the British government requesting the return of two items, a manuscript and an icon considered of particular importance to Ethiopia. Since then, gains have been in the restitution and restoration of cultural heritage which he credited to government, individuals and friends of Ethiopia abroad. The 24-metre-high Axum Obelisk exiled in Rome for 68 years was returned in April 2005 while the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was in office. In 2019, the incumbent Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed held discussions with French President Emanuel Macron who reportedly agreed to restitute 3,000 of Ethiopian cultural artefacts.

Early in July 2021, Ethiopia secured possession of looted artefacts, which had been due to go to auction at Venduehuis der Notarissen in the Netherlands on June 25, 2021. Samuel Million, Ethiopia Ambassador to the Netherlands was reported to have said:

'The Embassy is delighted to receive these priceless artefacts on behalf of the people of Ethiopia. The objects exemplify our rich cultural traditions, mastery of the art of manuscript-making and offer further proof of the contribution of Ethiopian ingenuity to the world. In securing the return of these items to the people and culture that produced them, we send a clear message that all illegally obtained cultural heritage must find its way home.'

Before the latest development in the Netherlands, Busby Auctioneers and Valuers withdrew Ethiopian artefacts looted by British forces from an auction arranged for June 17, 2021, after the appeal by Ethiopia and discussion with them to halt the auction. The two items, including an Ethiopian bible on vellum housed in a sewn leather pouch, together with an Ethiopian cross; and a set of graduated horn beakers, are from the estate of Major-General William Arbuthnot, a serving member of the late 19th-century expedition to Ethiopia, which culminated in the battle of Maqdala. *'These items are of immense cultural, spiritual, and historical value to Ethiopians. Current and future generations of Ethiopians are deserving of the restitution of their cultural heritage, so we very much look forward to returning these precious items to Ethiopia in due course,'* said Deputy Head of Ethiopian Mission in the UK Beyene Gebremeskel. The Embassy has then expressed its continued engagement and dialogue with Busby Auctioneers and Valuers on arrangements to return the items to their rightful home in Ethiopia.

Efforts by individuals

Desalegn explained that individuals from destination countries had willingly returned artefacts from their private collection through diplomatic channels. These include the shield and spear of Emperor Tewodros II and a crown taken from Ethiopia's Tigray region. In addition, foreign officials have at times presented the stolen cultural artefacts to Ethiopian emperors in the form of gifts.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church emphasises that tens of thousands of treasures were looted by the British troops.

Through ARCCH and in close collaboration with key stakeholders, Desalegn says Ethiopia is currently focused on preservation and preventive measures rather than restitution which is considered more complex. While the UNESCO 1970 Convention is non-retroactive, the debate and argument held by Europeans and others about safety and accessibility of heritage once returned to their original countries, combined with capacity limitations, domestic laws of destination countries make restitution attempts more challenging in African countries.

The fact that prevention of illicit trafficking, restitution and restoration of heritage is not something carried out by a sole individual or institution, the process has been facilitated through the establishment of Ethiopia's National Heritage Restitution Committee, involving different sectors, institutions and individuals. Alemayehu Getachew, Communication Director at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism reported that this committee comprises seven sub-committees for heritage research, media and arts, international law and diplomacy, religious institutions, restitution and facilitation of temporary facilities for returned treasures as well as advisory services both at home and abroad. With short, medium and long-term plans, the new body is believed to add new impetus and further enhance Ethiopia's unyielding commitment and efforts towards successful restitution of its cultural heritage.

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Repatriation as a Form of Restitution: A Debate on Early Recordings of Traditional Music & Dance from East Africa

Kahithe Kiiru

From the onset of its conscious efforts in the field of preservation of traditional music and dances, the international academic community had realized the necessity and urgency of documenting the study practices at the centre of a series of new disciplines. In 1947, the International Folk Music Council (today popularly known as the ICTM)³¹ was formed, and in 1949, in the organization's inaugural journal, the members agreed they '...must consider methods of recording and notation, so as to give as faithful a reproduction as possible of the art as presented to us in its natural state...' (Editorial, 1949 *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*). These recordings would appear particularly useful for researchers who are interested in historicity of traditional music and dance practices in the East African region. In order to identify and affirm the fluidity of the studied dance genres and forms, while, at the same time, analyzing their mutual relationships, it has become necessary to complement data collected 'in the field' with archival research. In this process, researchers have spent a multitude of hours looking into archival documents of different types, an approach that has been both challenging and rewarding due to the scarcity of archives on traditional music and dance in Kenya as well as the severe neglect and pilferage witnessed in the few existing ones.

Aside from paper documents, a large portion of the studied archives refers to audiovisual materials recorded in different periods of Kenya's colonial and post-colonial history. The difficulties in accessing certain archives were due to the apparent fact of an important percentage of them being kept in libraries and archives of the United Kingdom. This was not surprising, although the question of whether there ever had been an attempt at retrieving these recordings should be critically and seriously examined. In the meantime, even in the 21st century, the sites of knowledge production appear to be noticeably distant from the sites of embodied practice. Even though we are unable to change the past, we should attempt to look for remedies in the form of restitution, digitization and reproduction of all and any films and sound recording of traditional music and dance in East Africa. For us to do this, it is necessary to first and foremost understand the sociopolitical contexts of the production of these archives.

By the 1950s, two key figures of early African ethnomusicology were already actively participating in the international efforts of documenting for purposes of preservation. Amongst the members present in the first Inaugural meeting of the future ICTM was Dr. Klaus Wachsmann (1907 – 1984), a British ethnomusicologist of German origin who lived in Uganda from 1937 to 1957. Wachsmann was not a professional archivist, but worked closely with a professional sound engineer with whom he made roughly 1,500 unique recordings on reel-to-reel tapes, most of which have never been published. recordings were archived for over forty years at the British Library Sound Archive (BLSA) in London (Nannyonga-Tamusuza & Weintraub, 2012). In the late 1960s, tape copies of Wachsmann's recordings were sent to the Uganda Museum in Kampala, yet, at the time, there was no

³¹Stands for *International Council for Traditional Music*.

equipment to play back these recordings, which made them inaccessible to the local audiences. With time, due to lack of knowledge on preservation, the tapes sank into a state beyond repair.

Another prominent figure of early documentation efforts on the continent was Hugh Tracey (1903-1977), famous ethnomusicologist and founder of the International Library of African Music (ILAM) established in 1954 at Rhodes University in South Africa. Even though, as many of the pioneers, he had no formal education in music, from 1939-1970, Tracey mounted nineteen field excursions and progressively accumulated and, maybe even more importantly disseminated, one of the largest African music collections in the world comprising 'some 12,000 songs, 8,000 images, and eighteen films' (Thram, 2014). Several fieldtrips, such as the one in 1952, took place in East Africa and were facilitated and supported by the British colonial administration. When we add this to the fact of commercial exploitation of Tracey's field recordings that capitalized on the subordinate social and political position of the African native musicians, the need to define research, recording and archiving as historically situated practices (and consequently examine them as such) becomes imperative.

Between October 10 and 13, 1950 at the District Officer's headquarters in Malindi, Tracey recorded several music & dance genres. The Giriama Gonda dance, which found itself over sixty years later at the centre of our own research, was one of them. The dance, performed by Chadi wa Boyi (father to two of our contemporary informants³² based in the Kijiwe Tanga area) and his group is described by Tracey as 'one of the most pleasing attractive dance displays in the whole of East Africa, by child dancers all of who were expert performers.'³³ Tracey published the two Giriama³⁴ traditional dance recordings in his *Sounds of Africa* series, which, even if concerned with the continuation and vitality of African music, were clearly recorded and packaged for foreign (read Western) audiences.

On February 23, 2016, as we were between the ongoing fieldwork in Kilifi County and a consultancy for a Nairobi-based NGO,³⁵ we got the unexpected and most welcome opportunity to accompany Dr. Diane Thram, who was at the time the Director of ILAM, in a two days repatriation

³²Mzee Kadhenge wa Chadi passed away in 2017, a year after our last interviews with him. He had performed *gonda* dance his entire life, as inherited from his father.

³³Extract from Tracey's original field recordings dated 13th October 1950, courtesy of ILAM.

³⁴The compilation uses the term Wanyika to designate the community. their belonging to the bush (expressed by the derogatory term *Wanyika*), as opposed to the people living on the narrow Coastal strip and with underlying notes of backwardness;



mission. The International Library of African Music (ILAM) established by Tracey had carried out the project of digitizing its archives between 2007 and 2012, and then enabled online access to the catalogue. Their next agenda, championed by Thram (now former Director of ILAM) was that of *repatriation* - getting the field recordings out of the archive and back to communities where they were originally collected, a process they considered ‘...ethically bound to attempt...’ (ILAM, 2009) We found ourselves, thus, witnessing the repatriation of Chadi wa Boyi’s *gonda* recordings to his family members, notably two sons, the earlier mentioned Kadhenge wa Chadi and Safari Kangeta, and two daughters - Kache and Tabu Chadi. “He could not believe he would hear his father’s voice in this world again”, one of Mzee Kadhenge’s comments was translated to us, as we watched him sing and gesture with his hands as if drumming the rhythm played so any years ago by his now-deceased father.

This field anecdote is just one story – the story of one specific traditional music recording. ILAM had conducted similar repatriation trips to other regions of Kenya (Thram, 2019), as well as to other regions of the Continent. However, little to no knowledge of this initiative seems to exist among the Kenyan academic community. Similarly, no organized institutional initiative has been mounted to try retrieve them and/or build a national archive of such rare audiovisual documents. Uganda’s story is much different. In 2006, then Dr. Nannyonga-Tamusuza, founder and chair of the ethnomusicology program at Makerere University, conceived the idea of establishing an archive of audio and video recordings of music and dance, photographs, music scores, transcriptions, and written personal stories of artists from across Uganda. Through this project, eventually, in 2009, Wachsmann’s wish for his collection to be accessible to people in Uganda became a reality. Digitized MP3 copies of his collection from the BLSA were repatriated to Makerere University, thus forming the recently established Makerere University Klaus Wachsmann Music Archive (MAKWMA). In neighboring Tanzania, the Tanzania Heritage Project,³⁶ a cultural initiative dedicated to the preservation and celebration of the country’s rich musical heritage is digitizing and restoring reel-to-reel tapes recorded between the 1960s and 1980s, that had been rotting for decades in the molding archives of the Tanzanian Broadcasting Corporation. Even though repatriation is an avenue they have not (as much as we are aware) yet explored, a conscious effort and a system is in place attesting to the understanding of the inestimable value of early recording of music and dance in the region.

In 2006, then Dr. Nannyonga-Tamusuza, founder and chair of the ethnomusicology program at Makerere University, conceived the idea of establishing an archive of audio and video recordings of music and dance, photographs, music scores, transcriptions, and written personal stories of artists from across Uganda. Through this project, eventually, in 2009, Wachsmann’s wish for his collection to be accessible to people in Uganda became a reality.



³⁵The access to this information and our participation in the Repatriation project here described could not be possible without the support of Ketebul Music, whose staff I remain forever grateful to.

³⁶<http://www.tanzaniaheritageproject.org>

It is clear that 'sound repatriation is not a simple matter of returning what was once taken away, but rather a process that demands attention to cultural, ethical, and legal issues' (Nannyonga-Tamusuza & Weintraub, 2012). Questions such as to *whom* these materials should be returned; *what* should we do with them post-repatriation; *how* can they be accessed by the public; *which* platforms should they be stored in; *how* should the rights to these recordings be assigned; *who* should legally control their future use; etc. represent just the tip of the iceberg. Even if the perfect formula does not yet exist, best practices and recommendations can be derived from successfully completed repatriation projects.

In this paper I advocate for repatriation and re-study of early recordings of traditional music and dance from the region with the aim of their usage in creative practices of contemporary artists, as much as in academic research and learning contexts. It is time for an engaged approach to ethnomusicology, which puts the academically acquired knowledge on music – including the accompanying recorded materials – to use in a variety of other fields of action. Education and curriculum development, policy and advisory, safeguarding, event organization and programming, conflict resolution, arts therapy and community socio-economic development programmes are just but a part of what we could be doing with our knowledge and expertise. And maybe, a nationwide collaborative project aimed at retrieving, repatriating and re-creating an archive of Kenyan traditional music is the perfect place to start.

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