

STAATLICHE ETHNOGRAPHISCHE SAMMLUNGEN SACHSEN

RESEARCHING COLONIAL PROVENANCES

Final Report of the Project

*“Provenance of Colonial-Era Collections from Togo
in the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden and
the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig”*

**Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen
Dresden**

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WELCOME ADDRESS

The Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen, incorporating the three ethnographic museums in Leipzig, Dresden, and Herrnhut (GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, and Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut) are the second largest ethnographic museum alliance in Germany, and are united under the institutional umbrella of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. With their holdings of approximately 350,000 objects and 200,000 pictorial documents, they are inextricably associated with the legacy of colonialism. This places a special responsibility on us in terms of reappraising the colonial history of the collections.

In recent years, this has been the subject of various research activities, collaborative projects, and long-term exhibition programmes. I would like to mention, in particular, the REINVENTING GRASSI.SKD project funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation between 2020 and 2023, as well as the support provided by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the Free State of Saxony for the digitisation of the collection and the archival materials, as well as for the presentation of the results in an effective way for the general public. All this is part of a multifaceted endeavour to reassess the legacy of our institutions and investigate the provenance of their collections, to create transparency and, at the same time, to rethink how we exhibit objects, while also firmly incorporating the museums into diverse local and international networks through collaborative partnerships. What is needed are encounters that produce radical turnarounds and which promote the continuous development of ethical museum practices. The intensive research that has taken place in the course of the project “Provenance of Colonial-Era Collections from Togo in the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden and the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig”, funded by the German Lost Art Foundation, represents an important step in this process.

Since 2017, we have been able to meet long-standing demands for repatriation and restitution by returning the first items. In an initial step, we repatriated ancestral remains to the descendants. Most holdings of this kind were acquired by the three museums between 1875 and 1914, and they tell a particularly gruesome story of colonial violence and racist scientific practice. Further repatriations are being planned. Restitutions will also significantly shape the future of the ethnographic museums.

However, the intensive efforts undertaken so far to address the issue of colonial looting and other forms of appropriation in the context of structural violence – which is more patently evidenced in the collections of ethnographic museums than in almost any other type of institution – is to be seen merely as a beginning, given the large size of our collections. The findings of the provenance research project on the Togo collections summarised in this report constitute an important moment in this process. However, as the research team points out, research on individual “objects” and groups of holdings needs to be complemented by overarching research on collections, historical networks,

and procurement structures. This requires increased collaboration with other museums, not only ethnographic ones. And it demands that we, as an institution, are prepared to keep constantly learning. The project presented in this report has provided many important insights for this process.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the German Lost Art Foundation for funding the project. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their dedication and hard work, as well as all the partners in the project for their cooperation and critical input.

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch (Director of the Ethnological Museums Leipzig, Dresden, Herrnhut)

Researching colonial provenances: SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A total of 2,904 objects and 302 photographs labelled “Togo” are currently held in the collections of the Staatliche Ethnographischen Sammlungen Sachsen (SES) at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig and the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden. To a large extent, they were acquired in the context of German colonial rule in Togo. The German colony “Togoland” comprised the territory of the present-day state of Togo as well as parts of present-day Ghana (for an exhaustive analysis cf. Sebald 1988). The object collections that entered the museums in Leipzig and Dresden in the context of German colonial rule in Togo tell some particularly grim stories of violent appropriation.

The starting point for the investigations undertaken in this research project, which lasted just over two years and was funded by the German Lost Art Foundation (Stiftung Deutsches Zentrum Kulturgutverluste), was that the “objects” examined at the SES museums derived from a context of structural violence. What we already knew – before applying for funding for the project – about some of the actors from whom the museums obtained their objects included indications that a substantial number of the relevant objects were procured on behalf of the museums through acts of war and other forms of direct violence. These individuals were military officers, merchants, missionaries, and colonial officials, who were acting in the context of colonial warfare, the establishment of trading posts, annexation campaigns, and missionary work in the colony. The biographies of eight of these actors, and the routes of their travels, were researched in detail by the team as part of the project. The aim was to draw conclusions about the circumstances in which they procured the objects. Thus, between April 2021 and June 2023, a total of 700 objects were the subject of closer examination.

We were able to appoint the historian of colonialism Ohiniko Mawussé Toffa as the lead researcher for the project. Having graduated from the University of Lomé, Togo, with a degree in German Studies and Cultural Studies, and having subsequently gained his doctorate from the University of Bremen with a thesis on colonial and mission history, Ohiniko Toffa was in charge of selecting the objects as well as determining the substantive thrust of the project. His profound knowledge of German colonial rule in Togo, as well as his extensive contacts in Togo and Ghana, were invaluable for ensuring fulfilment of the research objectives. In collaboration with the research assistants Toni Hanel (Dresden) and Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes (Leipzig) as well as Ricarda Rivoir, who chose to place her Master’s thesis in the context of the project and who contributed intensively to the research and the preparation of the report, he drew up the biographies of the eight colonial actors and investigated the specific practices through which objects were appropriated.

Equal focus was placed on the objects themselves: What can we learn about their origin and their contexts of use by examining them closely, which also includes analysing their material composition and colouring? The art historian and museologist Emery Patrick Effiboley (University of Abomey-Calavi, Bénin) played a major role in addressing these questions during two research stays in Leipzig and Dresden. The curator of the Africa collections at the SES, Silvia Dolz, was responsible for selecting the topic and preparing the application. She was responsible for planning the project and, in association with myself, for its academic management. Julia Pfau, in her capacity as collection manager of the Leipzig Africa Collections, was not only significantly involved in the selection of objects, but also in the content-related support of the project. In Dresden, Silvia Dolz took on this task with the support of Maria Söhnel, the collection manager there. Last but not least, an important partner in the project was the historian and specialist in German Studies, Messan Tossa, who sifted through the abundant files at the Togo State Archives in Lomé relating to German colonial history and the colonial actors relevant to the project, and who established important contacts for further research. The administration of the project was conducted by Julia von Sigsfeld. As the report makes clear, this work is also to be regarded as essentially substantive in nature.

In recent years, the field of provenance research has developed and diversified significantly in the German context (cf. Förster 2023, Fründt 2020). This is demonstrated, for example, by the establishment of the German Lost Art Foundation's funding scheme entitled "Department for Cultural Goods and Collections from Colonial Contexts" headed by Larissa Förster. It is this scheme that provided funding for the project. Part of this development is the question, formulated again and again, as to what exactly provenance research encompasses: How narrow should the focus be on the circumstances and forms of "acquisition" under colonial conditions of power and domination? Nowadays, there is widespread acceptance of the view that transnational, collaborative generation of knowledge about the objects is important in order to trace their histories and the changed attributions of meaning through their translocation – which, in the colonial context, mostly involved the use of force. The concept of historical entanglement, which resists oversimplified dichotomies between the colonisers and the dispossessed, helps to counter a narrowly Eurocentric approach precisely by taking account of a complexity that goes beyond European influence (cf. Scholz 2018, Förster 2017). But the more than century-long "life" which the objects in the museum collections can look back on today is also significant (cf. von Bose 2023). It is filled with stories of museum classification, with the use of degrading and stereotypical descriptions; it tells stories of objects languishing in storerooms and of access to them being prevented (cf. most recently Assilkinga et al. 2023). Conversely, however, we find stories of custodial knowledge generation over generations, which, for all the necessity of questioning and criticising museum knowledge orders, is borne by a high level of professional as well as personal appreciation and a willingness to change perspectives.

The project was informed by the conviction that provenance research can only do justice to the complex histories of object appropriations and translocations, beyond merely establishing changes of ownership, by adopting a systematic and broadly conceived approach (cf. Sarr/Savoy 2018, Förster/Edenheiser/Fründt 2018: 17ff.). In this way, it can provide insights whose relevance extends far beyond the specific collections

being researched. It can generate knowledge contributing to a postcolonial history of entanglement, as well as to a better understanding of the history of ethnographic museums and their wide-ranging networks, and of the close connections that existed between museums and the project of colonial expansion and domination. Of course, with such a large number of objects, a two-year research project can only provide initial results that need to be explored further in future projects. The findings, and the evaluations derived from them, are therefore to be understood as just a snapshot in a longer research process. Important conclusions drawn from the project concern not only the appropriation contexts of the objects themselves, but also the structural conditions within which the small-scale research work is taking place across disciplinary, institutional, and national boundaries. We see bringing these findings to light as an important contribution to the field of provenance research, which is currently developing in so many different ways.

Transnational collaborative research has to overcome numerous obstacles. Firstly, there are bureaucratic and administrative obstacles, which repeatedly pose challenges to cooperation with partners on other continents when undertaking such a project. We have summarised these experiences and the recommendations derived from them in a separate chapter (see chapter “Postcolonial provenance research from the standpoint of project administration” under IV.). However, it is also the internal disputes among the team that have sometimes shown how the challenges of postcolonial provenance research in an ethnographic museum also directly affect the dynamics within the institution. External colleagues who are rightly critical of the institution and its history of colonial epistemologies come into direct contact with those whose professional biographies have long been intimately associated with the museum, sometimes over decades. Differing theoretical, methodological, and also very practical research strategies, experiences, and approaches converge, which inevitably gives rise to friction and occasionally conflict. Finding joint solutions takes time and always requires a great deal of energy among all those involved. For this reason, a project that puts the participating scholars in the contradictory position of us having to adopt a reflectively critical attitude towards the character of our own institutions and the structures in which we ourselves are involved (cf. Endter/Landkammer/Schneider 2021) inevitably has a relevance beyond itself. We have addressed this circumstance explicitly at various points in the report. Elsewhere, it is more subtly apparent.

Most of the chapters in this report were written collaboratively. These are based on the meticulous research carried out by Ohiniko Toffa in close cooperation with Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes and Toni Hanel, their drafts being supplemented and further expanded through an intensive editing process conducted by Ricarda Rivoir, Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Julia von Sigsfeld, Silvia Dolz, and myself. Some sections and sub-chapters, on the other hand, have been written by only one or two authors. It is therefore clear that this report is the result of a collaborative project undertaken jointly – but that certain contributions may also derive from individual participants or have been elaborated by them.

It was a joint decision not to publish all findings equally openly. Some details are too sensitive to share with such a broad readership. In this connection, we refer to future formats to be developed in collaboration with the growing network of partners in Togo, Ghana, and Bénin. Our deliberations regarding the publication of sensitive content also

relate to the issue of object images. From the start of the research project, we were constantly engaged in a discussion about accessibility: Who has a legitimate interest in viewing the objects openly, and who should be permitted to do so? What are the consequences for our research of the great discrepancy between the current unhindered accessibility for museum staff and the highly regulated, and all too often impossible, accessibility for outsiders? Another question concerns the matter of photographs, which form a significant sub-group within the large collection of objects. How should we treat photographs from the colonial context? Important references here include research on the understanding of photographs as objects (Bärnighausen et al. 2020), as well as the extensive research on the use of photographs in colonial contexts (cf. Junge 2021, Helff/Michels 2018). In consequence of this discussion, we decided not to publish any object photographs in the report or in the parallel publication of the objects in the Online Collection (OC). Instead, we would like to supplement the report with photographs documenting the work process, which of course also includes images of us working with the objects.

Finally, a few more “aids to reading”. An essential aspect in the joint reflection process concerns language. “Words matter” is how Wayne Modest and Robin Lelijveld summed it up (Modest/Lelijveld 2018). And precisely because words matter and convey time-bound ideas, it is so important to constantly question one’s own use of language. This is especially important with “objects” such as those that our research is concerned with. The placing of inverted commas here, and frequently throughout the report, around the term “objects” draws attention to a problem that also applies to many other words: namely, that the moment diverse and disparate items or artefacts – things – were incorporated into a museum collection, they immediately became “objects”. For lack of other terms, we also speak of objects here, but we mark our discomfort at the use of this word at various points by placing it in inverted commas. This acts as a reminder that the term is not to be understood descriptively (cf. Grimme/Kahanu/Schorch 2022). The inverted commas are an indication of the dilemma we find ourselves in – that we are ineluctably ensnared in the museum’s systems of categorisation, and that in talking and writing about the things in the museum, we again inevitably incorporate them into a categorial system that is incapable of doing justice to the full range of their meanings.

This “grappling for language” (Binter et al 2021: 19) is fundamental to any project of this kind; and it also demonstrates how terms are subject to cyclical fluctuation, no longer appearing adequate at a given point in time. Society changes, discussions evolve, and so language changes too. Another important example is the term “acquisition”: although it was introduced in the field of provenance research a few years ago as an alternative to the supposedly neutral term “collecting”, today it seems inappropriately affirmative with regard to collections procured in contexts of colonial violence. But what are we speaking of when we talk about “contexts of acquisition”? Can there ever be “neutral” terminology in this field – or should we rather assume that there is inherent violence in a situation where, under conditions of colonial domination, the circumstances surrounding object procurement inevitably constitute a context of structural violence? From the specific, often changing, use of terms in this project report, it can be seen that these debates have played an important role in our work. That also applies to the use of such terms in historical quotations that have a racist or strongly ethnicising tone. We have sometimes

signalised them at a graphic level in the report. In doing so, our aim is to express that we do not wish to transmit their racist word content without reserve. Furthermore, we have decided to use contemporary (self-)designations when referring to places and population groups. Any historical names that deviate from these are given in square brackets after the contemporary name.

This report concludes the project “Provenance of Colonial-Era Collections from Togo”, which lasted just over two years. This is the slightly abridged version of the official report version, which has been available in the Proveana database of the German Lost Art Foundation since the completion of the project. Its chapter structure closely follows the Foundation’s recommendations for final reports. The abridged version presented here is intended for a wider audience that does not have access to Proveana. We have had the German version translated into English and French so as to share the project’s findings with the many research partners and their networks, as well as international colleagues engaged in provenance research.

The 700 objects that are the focus of the project are not presented individually in the report, as this would exceed the scope many times over. Certain examples are discussed in the chapters on the object collections (see chapter “The provenance of selected groups of objects”). Detailed results of the collaborative work on individual objects are also made available to the interested public in the Online Collection of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD). In the report, there are permalinks to the individual objects in question; via the OC, however, the entire researched collection can also be viewed – including all those objects that are not referred to in detail in the report.

Acknowledgements

This project could not have been undertaken without close collaboration among a broad network of partners and the support of many colleagues in the immediate and wider professional environment. First of all, therefore, I would like to thank all those who have supported the research in the project as network partners.

My special thanks go to the project team itself: Ohiniko Toffa, Emery Patrick Effiboley, Messan Tossa, Silvia Dolz, Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Julia Pfau, Julia von Sigsfeld, Toni Hanel, Ricarda Rivoir, Maria Söhnel and Bernadett Freysoldt. I would especially like to thank Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, who, after completing her time as a research assistant, was instrumental in coordinating the writing of the report as part of her academic traineeship at Leipzig's GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde, starting in January 2023. Ricarda Rivoir, who worked on the project as a freelancer in connection with her Master's thesis, also contributed to the research and writing of the texts in the long final phase, to an extent that went far beyond what had been agreed. Both of them deserve my, and our, joint special thanks.

We were able to rely on the support of numerous colleagues at the SES throughout the entire period. Special mention should be made here of Tobias Firnhaber, Vanessa Kaspar, Birgit Scheps-Bretschneider, Kerstin Fuhrmann, Christiane Klauke, Sebastian Dressel, Stephan Tröbs, Binia Golub and Gerold Dubau. Particular thanks go also to Agnes Matthias, who, as a research associate in the SKD's Research and International Cooperation Department, provided important support in preparing the funding application for the project. To Katja Hofmann from the SKD's main editorial office of the DAPHNE project we owe sincere thanks for the continuous communication and technical support; the same applies to Katrin Stumpe and Klara Wiehl from the SKD's management accounting department.

From the outset, we were able to count on the constructively critical discussions with the Academic Advisory Board. The meetings were important moments when we could all come together (virtually) and share our thoughts and ideas. We would like to thank Anna-Maria Brandstetter, Bernhard Gißibl, Gesa Grimme, Hans Peter Hahn, Tilman Hannemann and Agnes Matthias for the always constructive feedback, and for their courteous collegiality.

Last, but not least, we would like to thank the Department for Cultural Goods and Collections from Colonial Contexts at the German Lost Art Foundation, specifically Larissa Förster, Jan Hüsgen, and Anna Wickes-Neira. With them, we were not only able to clarify the project-related questions and thereby build on a maximum of sensitivity regarding the challenges posed by such a project within the framework of the given institutional structures. Even in view of the frequently delicate considerations concerning content and strategies, they were always ready to provide constructive feedback. For that we are especially grateful.

Friedrich von Bose

I.

THE PROJECT

“PROVENANCE OF COLONIAL-ERA COLLECTIONS FROM TOGO”

The Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen bring together the three ethnographic museums in Saxony – the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig (MVL), the Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden (MVD) and the Völkerkundemuseum Herrnhut. The SES are part of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

The holdings of the ethnographic museums in Leipzig and Dresden include items recorded under 3,452 object numbers, as well as 302 inventory numbers in the photo collections, which bear the designation “Togo”. Among the object collection, 544 object numbers are held by the MVD and 2,908 numbers by the MVL. A total of 548 objects from both museums are no longer held there; they were either given to other institutions prior to the Second World War or they are considered losses of war. There are therefore 2,904 objects and 302 historical photographs now physically present in the SES. For this project, a total of eight collections within the museums were selected, two from the MVD and six from the MVL.

Working room at the storages. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig



Over the course of the project, just under 700 objects were selected for more detailed study because the known information about them suggested the circumstances of their acquisition might be related to a context of injustice. In prioritising these objects, we were following the approach of 'systematic postcolonial provenance research' (cf. Förster 2019) and the recommendations of the Deutscher Museumsbund (DMB) (2021).

The eight collections were purchased by or donated to the ethnographic museums of Dresden and Leipzig between 1899 and 1966. They are connected with the activities of German academics, traders, colonial officials, military officers, and missionaries in the historical territory of Togo under German colonial rule from 1884 to 1919. These individuals were involved in colonial exploration, in the establishment of trading posts, in annexation campaigns, and in missionary work. In this context, the backgrounds and activities of the following individuals were examined in detail:

- Ernst F. Gütschow (1869–1946)
- Oskar Marx (1862–1924)
- Harry Grunitzky (1873–1912)
- Adolf Diehl (1870–1943)
- Hans Gruner (1865–1943)
- Valentin von Massow (1864–1899)
- Gaston Thierry (1866–1904)
- Adam Mischlich (1864–1948).

In the project, particular attention was paid to objects appropriated in the context of military violence, as well as to objects that could be considered especially sensitive, meaning that they needed to be treated with special respect. The names of the previous owners of these cultural objects are mostly unknown to us. In order to obtain information about them and the exact circumstances of the change of ownership, the regional or cultural origin of the objects was to be determined by taking an object-related approach focusing on their materials, technique, design, and function. Furthermore, archival research was to be conducted in order to reconstruct the whereabouts and activities of the persons into whose possession the objects passed at that time. Attention centred on individuals with close involvement in the colonial service, for example colonial officials, members of the police force, participants in violent expeditions for colonial territorial expansion and for the suppression of resistance by the local population.

The 700 selected object numbers from the relevant collections of the MVL and MVD also include 36 losses of war from the Dresden museum, which, however, were part of a cohesive group of objects and are therefore included here. Effectively, then, a total of 664 objects and photographs were available for investigation. Research conducted in eleven archives

in Germany and Togo identified and evaluated numerous informative documents. In addition, the project involved extensive reading of already indexed historical sources, focusing specifically on the holdings of the MVD and MVL, as well as on the persons who procured them. By combining the knowledge gained from examining the items in the storages and by analysing the archival materials, it has been possible to identify more precisely a large proportion of these 700 objects in the eight collections and to determine how they came to be in the respective museums. The circumstances surrounding the appropriation of some of the objects could not be reconstructed in full.

Our research did not provide any indication that Ernst Gütschow ever went to the colony of Togo. He evidently acquired the collection that he donated to the MVD from various colonial traders and ethnologists. Notes in the archival records, such as "Hinterland Togo", provide clues as to the context in which the objects were appropriated. Research on Oskar Marx has revealed that he was in Togo for the purpose of establishing a telegraph connection. The fact that he acquired objects there is partly evident from the characteristics of the objects. These, as well as the photographs, do indeed come from the regions where he worked. Two people, Harry Grunitzky and Adolf Diehl, travelled in "Togoland" as traders and acted mostly in that capacity, sometimes buying directly from colonial officers in the war zone. Research has proven that three of the individuals investigated – Hans Gruner, Valentin von Massow, and Gaston Thierry – acted in explicitly war-related contexts in the colony of Togo. Finally, Adam Mischlich is a very ambivalent figure. He does not appear to have been directly involved in warfare, yet the collection he bequeathed tells a war story.

Silvia Dolz and Ohiniko Toffa



Meeting of the project team in the Prep Room on 24 May 2022. From left to right: Silvia Dolz, Toni Hanel, Ohiniko Toffa, Julia von Sigsfeld, Julia Pfau, Ricarda Rivoir, Friedrich von Bose, Emery Patrick Effiboley.
Photo: Theo Thiesmeier

THE PROJECT TEAM

- Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, research assistant, since 1 January 2023 assistant curator at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig
- Dr. Friedrich von Bose, head of research and exhibitions, Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen
- Silvia Dolz, custodian of the Africa Collections, Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen
- Dr. Emery Patrick Effiboley, lecturer in history of art and head of the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Abomey-Calavi, Bénin
- Dr. Bernadett Freysoldt, freelance restorer, since 1 October 2022 employed at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig

- Toni Hanel, research assistant,
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- Julia Pfau, collections manager,
GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig
- Ricarda Rivoir, freelance research associate in connection with her master's thesis,
GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig
- Dr. Julia von Sigsfeld, research assistant to the director,
Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen
- Maria Söhnel, Collections manager,
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II.

INITIAL SITUATION

&

METHODOLOGY

THE INITIAL SITUATION AT THE TWO MUSEUMS



Meeting of the project team in the Prep Room on 24 May 2022. Photo: Theo Thiesmeier

The groups of objects whose place of origin was recorded as “Togo” had already been the subject of previous research and had featured in several exhibitions at the ethnographic museums in Leipzig and Dresden. Parts of the collection that had been donated to the MVD by Ernst Gütschow had been included in research projects, especially on textile crafts in Africa, and in exhibitions on various topics, such as provenance research (“Gaben an die Residenz”, Dresden 2004) (Martin/Dolz et al. 2004), social categorisation and identity negotiation in a global context (“Haut und Hülle. Vom Schmücken und Kleiden”, Dresden 2005), as well as religious and philosophical issues (“Götter aus Afrika”.

Photographs by Leonore Mau and texts by Hubert Fichte, Dresden 1999). In 2002, Silvia Dolz conducted a two-month research trip to Ghana, Togo, Bénin¹, and Nigeria. This was followed in 2017 by another research trip to the eastern Volta region of Ghana. Both visits were used for networking and for investigating the origin of certain groups of objects at the museum which derived from the former German colonial territory of Togo. The connection established with the art historian and museologist Emery Patrick Effiboley has been maintained to this day (Effiboley 2008: 125-132, 2005: 79-90).

In the 1990s, the ethnologist Hans Peter Hahn conducted research on the material culture of the societies of northern Togo. His studies among the Bassari [Basari], Konkomba, Kabye/Kabiye [Kabre, Kabure] and Lamba [Namba] – carried out in cooperation with the former curator of collections from the African continent of the MVL, Christine Seige – were complemented by investigations on parts of the MVL collection as well as analysis of archival material on the colonial actors, which are relevant to this project (Hahn 1996, 1993, 1991). Further findings arising from research on the museum collections of the region were published in 1990 in cooperation with the Julius Lips Institute of the University of Leipzig in the annotated bibliography of German-language literature on the ethnography and history of Togo and south-eastern Ghana (Seige/Liedtke 1990).

The research carried out by Ohiniko Mawussé Toffa from 2015 to 2019 on the history of German-Togolese relations, which focused on aspects of colonial and mission history, also provided important preliminary groundwork. His research had not previously been connected with the object and archive holdings at museums in Saxony.

When the project started, the collections of both museums had already been documented, catalogued, and entered into the DAPHNE database, but they had not yet been researched, described, or photographed in detail.

Silvia Dolz

1 This refers to the République du Bénin (Republic of Benin). In contrast to the historical kingdom or present-day Obaship of Benin in Nigeria, the name “Bénin” in the text refers to the present-day state.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES



Ohiniko Toffa in the storages' working room on 7 February 2022. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig

Between the actor-related and the “object”-biographical approach

In seeking to identify the provenance of the objects, focusing particularly on the contexts of their appropriation, we took a twofold approach. On the one hand, we were interested in tracing the biographies of the colonial actors – i. e. those individuals within the colonial structures who procured the objects, often with the direct use of violence, and later gave them to the museums – and understanding how they were specifically involved in the colonial system (cf. most recently LeGall 2023). At the same time, we also employed an “object”-biographical approach. The object-biographical perspective is based on the ideas presented in Igor Kopytoff’s *The cultural biography of things* (1986). This approach involves tracing the paths taken by an object and the value attributed to it at various

times, and using this information to understand social processes in a larger context. The concept of object biographies has been much discussed in recent decades, especially in respect of work with museum collections (cf. Rodatus/von Oswald 2015, Hahn 2015, Byrne et al. 2011, Gosden/Larson 2007, Hoskins 2006).

This research was undertaken primarily in various archives and in the museum storages of the MVL and MVD. An essential aspect of the object-biographical approach was communication and collaboration with research partners in Togo, Ghana, and Bénin. Also of great importance was communication with scholars at other museums and universities who have already conducted research on the colonial actors in question, or on comparable object collections, either on account of their own research interests or on the basis of their institutions' holdings.

Archives and personal estates

Research in various archives provided important information about the historical context and the colonial actors, which was useful for investigating the provenances of the objects. The aim was to reconstruct the whereabouts, activities, responsibilities, and networks of the eight individuals at various times. The focus was on determining the conditions under which they brought objects into their possession and passed them on to the museums. In addition, by researching the actors and their mentalities, it was possible to expose and critically interpret colonial epistemology “along the archival grain” (cf. Stoler 2009). At the same time, the insights gained were continuously linked to the objects held in the MVL and MVD and the results were recorded in the museums' internal database DAPHNE. Furthermore, we compiled sometimes very detailed biographical profiles of the eight actors, which are also now available as comprehensive reference works for future projects.

The initial information was provided by the documentary records of the MVL and MVD's holdings, which include files on all the collections researched as part of this project. For one thing, these in-house archives provided information about contacts between museum staff and the object donors, as well as information about the specific circumstances in which certain objects were acquired in the colonial context. In addition, the surviving correspondence made it possible to establish the motivations of the historical actors with regard to the trade in “ethnographic objects”. These files served as a starting point that was of great importance for determining what specific research in other archives was required.

Through research in archives in German-speaking countries and in Togo, it was possible to consolidate these findings and to investigate them more comprehensively in their (colonial) historical context. In Germany, research on Ernst Gütschow was conducted in the **Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden**. The records of the late German historian and expert on the colony of Togo, Peter Sebald, held at the **Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO)** in Berlin were also of key significance. Among other things, they contain very detailed transcribed archival records on the “German Togo Hinterland Expedition” (DTE) (1894/1895). Two visits to the ZMO archives in Berlin opened many research avenues and provided us

with relevant information. Further research visits to the **Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde** have shown that the procurement of objects in the German colonial period in Togo was often a commissioned activity of individuals engaged in colonial service. To a large extent, it was organised and carried out on the basis of colonial policy. As will become clear in the documentation and evaluation of the research findings, most of the objects in the collections at the MVL and MVD can be attributed to these colonial practices. For the biography of Harry Grunitzky, archival research was also conducted at the **Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) in Hamburg** and in Berlin-Lichterfelde. Additional archival materials from the **Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SMB-SPK)**, the **Deutsches Museum** in Munich and the **Technische Universität Berlin (TU)** facilitated the research. Likewise, research undertaken in the research archive of **Mission 21 (Evangelisches Missionswerk Basel)** contributed significantly towards establishing the biography of Adam Mischlich.

The main object of Messan Tossa's work was to review and evaluate files in various archives in Togo and Cameroon with the aim of conducting research on the colonial actors and appropriation contexts. The holdings of the Archidiocèse de Lomé are currently almost inaccessible due to an internal decision by the administrator, who is also a Catholic priest and systematically denies access to researchers studying Catholic mission history. Work in the National Archives of Cameroon was also prevented by the circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, his research concentrated on the holdings of the **National Archives of Togo** in Lomé. These consist of three categories: the holdings dating from the German colonial period (the Fonds Allemand, abbreviated as FA), the holdings from the French colonial period, and the holdings from the post-colonial period. His work focused on the holdings from the German colonial period, which are structured into three sets of files: the files of the Imperial Government of Togo (FA1), the files of the Imperial District Court of the Protectorate of Togo (FA2), and the files of the district authorities (FA3). In his research, Messan Tossa concentrated on the files of the Imperial Government of Togo (FA1), which contained information on the biographical data and places of residence of Gaston Thierry, Valentin von Massow, Hans Gruner, and Adam Mischlich. The National Archives of Togo do not contain any records relating to Harry Grunitzky, Adolf Diehl, Oskar Marx, or Ernst Gütschow.

The files available in the National Archives in Lomé were more extensive than anticipated at the beginning of the project. The large volume of archival material meant that the main task undertaken in the course of this project was sifting through and indexing the existing material. The materials that were analysed in more detail did not yield any new findings. The files reviewed have therefore not been included in the evaluation in this report. However, digital photographs of the files taken in the course of these investigations are available for further research.

The volume of material also raised the issue of consistency in the structuring of the holdings, which will require continued collaboration with researchers at the National Archives in Lomé and at German archives. This is also linked to the question of the visibility of the National Archives of Togo, in particular, whose infrastructural working conditions need to be improved by installing reliable technical equipment. Only then, according to Messan Tossa, will it be possible to work towards establishing an

international research network, which must ultimately also have full access to the files on the history of Togo held in European archives. Furthermore, the creation of a legal framework is desirable that will make the archival holdings of religious, non-governmental, and governmental institutions accessible to local and international researchers.

Work in the museum storages

The work in the storages focused primarily on determining the materials, technique, design, function, and origin of the “objects”. Hence, the objects themselves were at the forefront in their role as historical bodies of knowledge.² Alice Hertzog and Enibokun Uzebu-Imarhiagbe have elaborated on how the so-called Benin Bronzes can be understood as a “displaced archive, an archive that is composed of ivory and bronze rather than paper” (2022). While the bronzes from Benin City in Nigeria can be seen as a visual archive in a special sense and thus constitute “an organised repository of historical material” (ibid.), other collections from colonial contexts also enable access to knowledge stocks, especially for representatives of the societies of origin. In many cases, they have the status of historical sources.

In this work on and with the objects, the main focus was on the question of what conclusions we can draw as to the exact origin of the objects and their specific contexts of use. By directly examining the objects in changing combinations of team members and with invited experts, we aimed to gain insights into the specific contexts in which they were used and to attain an understanding of the objects’ epistemic, quotidian, or religious status in the society of origin. In accordance with Britta Lange’s remarks on “sensitive collections” (Lange 2011), we were less concerned with classifying the objects as “sensitive” than with “the stories that made such objects sensitive collection objects in the first place” (ibid.: 19). These include the contexts of their production and use, as well as “their provenance, their transfer, their circulation, their removal from lifeworld contexts, and ultimately their transformation into collection objects” (ibid.). The experience, knowledge, and recommendations of experts from the respective societies of origin were indispensable for this work.

Examining the objects in the museum storage provided opportunities for the researchers involved in the project to gain important new insights. This often enabled the meanings that had previously been attributed to objects in the museum to be corrected, and the new findings could then be added to the DAPHNE database. For example, there were some garments with leather appliqués that were not assigned to any region or population group. These were Muslim protective amulets that could contain Qur’anic inscriptions or magical signs. In some cases, certain leather amulets were thus a first indication of Muslim population groups such as the Dagomba, Tchokossi/Anufo [Cakosi, Tschokossi, Mangu], Hausa [Hausa] or Fula/Fulani/Fulbe [Fullah]. In addition to Muslim population groups, the leather amulets were also used in other cultural-religious contexts as protective power carriers. Another example are appliqués consisting of cowrie shells, which have

2 On this subject cf. the recommendations regarding methodology in the final report of the Dutch pilot project “Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era” (PPOCE): Mooren/Stutje/van Vree 2022: 36-40.

special meanings in Togo and in West Africa. Further avenues of research were thus opened up simply by visually examining the objects. Colours, too, had certain meanings in the contemporary context, thus enabling them to be analysed in terms of their cultural or spiritual significance. Out of respect for this knowledge, which relates to the intimate lives of the people concerned, not all the information obtained is published in this report.

The cultural-historical reconstruction of the objects described here provided indications as to the possible circumstances of their appropriation and constantly called attention to the colonial actors. How did they get hold of “objects” that were part of a strictly coded complex of knowledge and experience? To what extent can specific forms of violence be evidenced here? What conclusions do the results allow us to draw about the characters of the individuals who procured these objects for the museums? In this connection, mention can be made, for instance, of the interest of Adam Mischlich, who focused on religious objects and used his knowledge as a former missionary to bring them into his possession (see chapter “Attributes of the *Fofie*” and “‘Odom’ Attributes”). The collection assembled by Harry Grunitzky likewise contains religious and sensitive objects, some of which can also be classified as “secret” in the sense of knowledge not intended for public disclosure. In his case, it is likely that the objects were acquired via local female intermediaries (see chapter on Harry Grunitzky).

The work on the objects thus provided ever new impulses for determining the direction of the archival research. By regarding the objects themselves as actors, it was possible to discover object histories that were partly at odds with the perspective of those who procured the objects. In cooperation with local actors from the regions concerned, the researchers sought to identify “other” or counter-histories to those of the traditional colonial narratives. In this respect, the object-biographical approach is not only to be understood as a complementary broadening of perspectives, but indeed as a necessary corrective to the tendency of focusing on the biographies of the colonial actors. This was particularly important with regard to the significance of the objects and also in relation to possible restitution claims.

An example of this is the work on [a headdress from Yendi](#) [Jendi], which came into the focus of this project as a result of information obtained by Yann LeGall and Elias Aguigah through their research as part of the project “The Restitution of Knowledge” (TU Berlin, 2020–2023) in collaboration with Julia Pfau. The headdress belonged to a high-ranking personage of the Dagbon kingdom in the north-east of present-day Ghana and was looted during a military campaign against the Dagomba (see chapter “The Campaign against the Dagomba”). This led first to deeper engagement with the context in which this object was appropriated and investigations regarding the colonial perpetrators of violence, and this was then underpinned by further archival research as well as more detailed interrogation of the subject in an exhibition (see chapter “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”). In addition, contact was established with representatives of the Dagomba through Michael Gyimah, a guest researcher at the MVL.

In November 2022, Michael Gyimah, Ricarda Rivoir, and Jan König undertook a two-week study visit, formally independent of the research project, in order to obtain the perspective of representatives of the Dagomba (see chapter “Networking: Strategies and Documentation”). Through the oral history of the Dagomba, they were able to find out information about other objects researched in the project. They were able to clearly identify them as war booty and to find out the proper names of the objects, which were previously unknown to the museum. Two of the objects were even wrongly classified as “Hausa” in the database. This clearly demonstrates how the perspective of representatives of the objects’ society of origin can correct the perceptions of the colonial actors and of the museum staff.³ The study visit highlighted the potentials of research starting out from the object, as well as the necessity of continuing the research work and collaboration. As Iris Edenheiser and Bernhard Gißibl explain, collaborative research with actors from the so-called societies of origin offers the chance to counteract the “striking lack of knowledge” about the objects and thus to create “new connections between here and there” (2021: 216).

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Friedrich von Bose, Ricarda Rivoir, Ohiniko Toffa and Messan Tossa

3 See Labischinski (2020) for a critical reflection on collaborative projects of ethnological museums.

Object statistics and rationale behind the selection of objects

The collections selected for the project, which were procured by the aforementioned actors in the context of the German colonial period in Togo, come from present-day Togo, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, and Bénin. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that before the border negotiations between the German, French, and British colonial powers in 1897, campaigns of conquest took place beyond the later colonial borders. On the other hand, the borders of the German colony of Togo established during the negotiations also extended beyond the present-day borders of Togo, so that parts of Ghana were also under German control.

In Leipzig, the relevant collections, which can be traced back to the six actors Valentin von Massow, Hans Gruner, Gaston Thierry, Adam Mischlich, Adolf Diehl, and Harry Grunitzky, comprise 2,276 objects, 432 of which were labelled as war losses and four as having been given to other institutions. Hence, 1,840 objects were physically available for the project. In Dresden, two relevant groups of objects donated by Ernst Gütschow and Oskar Marx were selected, comprising a total of 300 inventory numbers. Of these, 36 are considered war losses. Accordingly, 264 items were available for research, 77 of which are historical photographs.

Julia Pfau in the storages' working room. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig



The original plan at the time of submitting the project proposal was to single out actors whose intentions, and the background for their appropriation of objects, were not known, or where it could be assumed that violence was involved in the appropriations. In order to arrive at a manageable number of objects within the envisaged duration of the project, we needed to select, within the much larger collections, groups of objects that were presumed to have a religious character or were not intended for public view, and that can be regarded as particularly sensitive due to their significance and use. In doing so, the project was also following the recommendations of the Deutscher Museumsbund (DMB) that when undertaking provenance research priority should be given to religious or sensitive objects and objects from contexts of colonial violence, since these may potentially have greater significance for their communities of origin (DMB 2021: 42f.).

The selected objects are grouped as follows:

- Ernst Gütschow, 196 objects: These are mostly ritual and religious objects, musical instruments and textiles, all of which were investigated as part of the project.
- Oskar Marx, 27 objects: Weapons, clothing, religious objects, implements for crafts, and household goods. As well as 77 historical photographs that provide insights into the landscape, settlement patterns, village life, colonial architecture, and activities (such as the construction of a telegraph connection) and include group and individual portraits. The entire collection was selected for investigation in the project.
- Harry Grunitzky, 53 objects: Clothing, household items, musical instruments, colon figurines, mainly religious objects, and jewellery. Of these, 19 objects were selected for the project.
- Adolf Diehl, 714 objects: Receptacles, clothing, vessels, household goods, hunting objects, musical instruments, jewellery, religious objects, textiles, weapons, and tools, as well as 25 photographs. Of these, 58 objects were included in the project.
- Hans Gruner, 154 objects: Receptacles, clothing, vessels, household goods, hunting objects, musical instruments (drums), natural objects, religious objects, jewellery, weapons, and tools. Of these, 43 objects were included in the project.
- Valentin von Massow, 239 objects: Receptacles, clothing, vessels, hunting objects, religious objects, jewellery, weapons, and tools. We selected 79 objects from this collection for the project.
- Gaston Thierry, 223 objects: Clothing, household goods, hunting objects, jewellery, animal equipment, and weapons. 48 objects that were donated to the MVL by Thierry were selected for further research.
- Adam Mischlich, 457 objects: Receptacles, clothing, vessels, graphic art, household goods, hunting objects, models, musical instruments, furniture, natural objects, sculptures, religious objects (*Fofie* collection), jewellery, insignia, textiles, and tools. Of these objects, 153 were investigated as part of the project.

Hence, a total of 700 inventory numbers were investigated during the project. For a large part of the objects, we did not have any information for determining the regional or cultural origin of the objects. Ohiniko Toffa and Emery Patrick Effiboley were able to provide important information on the cultural-historical significance of the objects by examining them in the storeroom, and were thus able to assign some of the collections to a specific population group and region. This also resulted in some objects being identified as particularly sensitive (see chapter “Between the actor-related and the ‘object’-biographical approach”).

Based on these initial findings, Ricarda Rivoir, Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, and Toni Hanel were then able to determine in more detail the contexts of the objects’ appropriation. It was possible to establish links between the findings obtained through the parallel archive and literature research about the colonial actors, their activities and places of residence in the colony at specific times, and the regions from which the objects originated. For example, the procurement context of some objects could be traced back to a specific wartime campaign conducted by the actors concerned.

At the MVD, the 264 objects did not undergo any further sub-division according to priority. Instead, the entire collections were selected for further investigation, since in the cases of both Gütschow and Marx there was hardly any information available about them personally or about the appropriation contexts and provenance of the objects that came to the MVD via these two actors. At the MVL, a narrower selection of objects was made following the initial research. On the one hand, we prioritised those holdings which seemed likely to have been appropriated in an explicitly violent context, such as specific colonial military campaigns. On the other hand, objects were chosen that had a special cultural or social importance due to the meaning attributed to them and their use. The selection criteria for the project were also worked out in cooperation with international partners and other research institutions. Our focus here was also on possible future restitutions, with the cultural and colonial-historical significance for contemporary Togolese and other West African societies from which objects were removed also playing a role.

According to the DMB’s “Guidelines for Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts”, objects that were unjustly seized from their former owners should be restituted in recognition of the injustice committed (DMB 2021: 82).⁴ Furthermore, objects with “special significance” for either the former owners or the current descendants, such as sensitive objects, should be returned (ibid.: 83f.).

These selection criteria and the initial indications regarding the provenance of some of the collections enabled Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes to make a preliminary selection of objects from the MVL. The final selection of a total of 400 objects was then made by Ohiniko Toffa. Based on the selection criteria, we prioritised the following objects: weapons, clothing, so-called whistles/flutes/horns, *récades/mankpo/sceptres/staffs*, drums and (ancestral) chairs, all of which are most likely either related to colonial

4 However, colonialism is not defined here as a general context of injustice involving structural violence, but refers, for example, to indications of “direct use of violence” in connection with the appropriation of objects (DMB 2021: 84f.).

violence and war, are political status objects or insignia of local authorities, and/or have a religious significance. The latter also include the objects of the *Xɛbioso* and *Fofie*, the “Odom” attributes, amulet belts, *Sokpé* stones and the *Okra*, *Tchicherik* and *Lɛgba* figures. Furthermore, we included all objects from the contexts of the campaigns against the Dagomba or the Kabiye among the items selected for the project (for more information, see individual chapters on the object collections under III).

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The latter category includes, for example, objects related to the Kondo dance of the Kabiye. The Kondo initiation ceremonies still exist today and possess great significance for the Kabiye. The objects used in this ritual play an important cultural role for the people, especially the elders, in the Kara region. Their significance is also linked to the colonial historical dimension, as the objects were most likely stolen by Valentin von Massow in a colonial campaign of conquest against the Kabiye in early 1898. Hence, they carry a double meaning for the people concerned.

Ohiniko Toffa

Networking: Strategies and Documentation

Collaboration with stakeholders from the academic and political spheres in Germany, Togo, Ghana, and Bénin was a key aspect of the project. In the following, the basic principles, strategies, and results of the established and expanded research network are presented. It is important to note that in all the various areas the contacts resulted in snowball effects. The partners with whom we collaborated referred us to their contacts, and so the project, and individual members of the team, became established as points of connection in a large network – partly already close-knit, partly with potential for expansion – as described below.

Starting point with regard to the transnational academic field

Contacts in the transnational academic field were established on the basis of collaborative research relationships that had already existed for decades. Of particular importance was the network established by the late specialist in German colonial history, Peter Sebald, with colleagues at the University of Lomé in the 1990s. On the occasion of his death, his colleagues in Lomé paid tribute to the almost 30 years of their cooperation by producing a commemorative publication (Gayibor et al. 2020). Adjai Oloukpona-Yinnon reflected on both the need for and the challenges posed by this cooperation under the title “Building Bridges” (Mäder et al. 2016: 17f.). His comments on the conditions and prerequisites for sustainable cooperation provided useful insights for our networking activities in connection with the project.

This already affected the composition of the team. Ohiniko Toffa, for example, was already integrated into a large academic network through his education at the Université de Lomé and his doctorate in the field of colonial history at the University of Bremen. The same applies to Messan Tossa, who is affiliated with the Université de Lomé and the National Archives of Togo. Emery Patrick Effiboley, as an art historian and museologist, has already contributed to the cultural-historical determination of various groups of objects during two research stays at the MVD and MVL. Their involvement meant that, right from the outset, the project could benefit from contacts with various academic circles and with members of diverse disciplines in the transnational research environment.

Colleagues at other museums and research projects in the German context

The importance of collaborating with scholars in the German research environment who were also studying collections from the former colony of Togo quickly became clear. This applied to colleagues both at other museums and in other research projects. The reason for this is that the collections often go back to the same contexts of appropriation. This is because, on the one hand, the colonial actors were often in contact with several museums, and on the other hand, the museums frequently resold objects to one another. These are therefore artificially separated collections that can only be understood as full ensembles by adopting a cross-institutional comparative view (cf. Aguigah/LeGall/Wagne 2023). The same applies to the in-house archives. For example, the correspondence between Karl Weule in Leipzig and Felix von Luschan in Berlin, archived by the respective recipients, complement each other.

This clearly demonstrates that provenance research can only be conducted using a relational approach. Only by tracing connections that go beyond the institutional boundaries of the museum can we grasp a history that involves a multitude of actors both inside and outside the museum (cf. Gosden/Larson 2007).

Major partners in this endeavour were colleagues from the **Ethnologisches Museum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin** (EM/SMB), Ilya Labischinski, Verena Rodatus, Kristin Weber-Sinn, Julia Binter and Maria Ellendorf, as well as the research group working on the project **“The Restitution of Knowledge”** (2020–2023), which was conducted under the direction of Bénédicte Savoy at the TU Berlin. Their research assistant Yann LeGall is researching collections from the former German colony of Togo, focusing in particular on the so-called “punitive expeditions”. The archival documents provided by him and his team as well as the information on the collections assembled by Thierry and von Massow enabled the relevant objects in the MVL to be quickly classified.

A further essential aspect of these collaborations is that by sharing each other’s findings, we were able to condense the investigation of historical micro-contexts enormously. This would otherwise have been almost impossible to manage within the runtime of the project. The extensive overviews, chronologies, and summaries regarding individual colonial actors and their activities that we received from the aforementioned colleagues were particularly helpful.

The straightforward exchange of information often enabled us to quickly develop a comprehensive picture of the appropriation contexts and to trace the paths taken by the objects.

Mention must also be made of the anthropologist **Anna-Maria Brandstetter** (University of Mainz), who is also a member of the Academic Advisory Board, and **Christraud M. Geary** (Teel Senior Curator Emerita of African and Oceanic Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Through collaboration with them, we benefited considerably from their many years of research on Adolf Diehl. We were greatly assisted by the information on Diehl's biography and his exhibition in Wiesbaden in 1900.

Our research on the *Sokpé* stones (see chapter "*Sokpé* stones") brought us into contact with **Bernhard Wörrle** (Deutsches Museum, Munich). He contacted us to discuss their cultural significance. The resulting meeting initiated close collaboration between the Deutsches Museum and the MVL on these special objects.

Furthermore, we were able to establish contact with **Oussounou Abdel-Aziz Sandja**, who is currently conducting research on collections from Togo at the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums in Mannheim. The exchange of information with him on the war booty accumulated by von Massow will continue to be an important point of reference in the future.

Political networking

During the project, Ohiniko Toffa succeeded in establishing contact with the Ambassador of the Republic of Togo in Germany, Komi Bayédzè Dagoh, who unfortunately passed away in October 2022. On 25 March 2022, he visited the MVL together with the officer responsible for public relations at the embassy, Mr Kossi Aziabou. The subject of their discussion with the director Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, Friedrich von Bose, Ohiniko Toffa and some members of the project team was the initiation of steps towards restitution and long-term collaboration between staff of the SES/SKD and institutions in Togo, with the aim of jointly developing strategies for a new, future museum policy and restitution.

Ohiniko Toffa presented the contents and goals of the project and argued that Togolese-German cooperation must take place at both the political and the academic level. Director Léontine Meijer-van Mensch endorsed this and emphasised that she is resolved, on behalf of the museum, to take responsibility for finding a new relational ethic between Germany and Togo, and that restitution is an intrinsic part of this. Ambassador Komi Bayédzè Dagoh appealed for a reappraisal of the two countries' difficult shared past in order to enable them to move together towards a better future, which can contribute towards bringing about restitution, reparation, and reconciliation. He also appealed for a formal communication from the German side, officially disclosing to the Togolese people what objects from Togo are held in German museums, thus overcoming the hierarchical distribution of knowledge.



Reception of the Togolese Ambassador at the Museum on 25 March 2022. From left to right: Ambassador Komi Bayédzè Dagoh, Kossi Aziabou, Ricarda Rivoir, Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Julia Pfau, Friedrich von Bose, Ohiniko Toffa, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch. Photo: Julia von Sigsfeld

In June 2023, another meeting took place between the SES and the Embassy of the Republic of Togo. This time, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, Friedrich von Bose and Ohiniko Toffa travelled to Berlin to meet with the chargé d'affaires a.i. of the embassy, Mr Tchilabalo Abaki, and Mr Kossi Aziabou. During the meeting, the importance of sustainable Togolese-German cooperation was reaffirmed. In this context, it was also agreed that the Embassy would use its political channels to make the research findings published in the project report known in Togo.

Collection-related networking

On the basis of the interim findings of the research project, we endeavoured to establish contacts with actors in the respective regions of origin of individual groups of objects that had been investigated. This sometimes proved to be difficult, not least because it had only been possible to earmark limited project resources for lengthy research trips (see chapter “Postcolonial provenance research from the standpoint of project administration” under IV.).

Nevertheless, Ohiniko Toffa was able to use his networks in Togo to obtain information about certain objects and object groups. For this purpose, he consulted not only colleagues in academic settings, but also political representatives, religious dignitaries, and other institutions and individuals. The contacts made or newly established in this context are not publicly disclosed in the project report; however, on request, contacts for further research can be arranged. Similarly, Messan Tossa has established contact with various institutions and individuals in Togo as part of his project work at the National Archives of Togo. These contacts are likewise not revealed publicly here, but it is possible to communicate with them in the context of further research work.

At this juncture it must be mentioned that contact with the MVL’s visiting researcher **Michael Gyimah** (researcher at the ANO Institute of Arts and Knowledge in Accra, Ghana) was of crucial importance. Thanks to his experience and contacts in Yendi (Ghana), a trip was made together with Ricarda Rivoir and the junior curator at the MVL, **Jan König**. Initially, this visit was not directly related to the research project, but it also proved to be beneficial for the building of networks regarding the project. The research group was able to establish important contacts for further work on the holdings from Dagbon in north-eastern Ghana.

Other important contacts were **Kodzo Gavua**, university professor at the Department of Archeology and Museum Studies and chair of the “Ghana Focal Team on Reparation and Restitution of Illegally Trafficked and Stolen Cultural Heritage and Artifacts”, and **Sela Adjei**, internationally active, multidisciplinary artist, scholar and curator, who is currently part of the “Legba-Dzoka project” led by Birgit Meyer at the Übersee-Museum Bremen. Communication took place with both of them regarding the research work and the attitude of the SES towards restitution. Kodzo Gavua, in his function as government advisor, is an important contact person for the further work of the museum.

During the research stay in Yendi, it was also possible to establish relationships with local network partners. Of particular importance were contacts with members of the **Yendi Heritage and Resource Center (YHRC)**, which was founded in 2019, especially with its chairperson **Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan Iddi** and the assembly member of the Yendi City Council, responsible for the neighborhood of the Royal District, **Mohammed Alimanche**. They both welcomed the research team and intensive discussions took place on German colonial history in Dagbon, as well as on the question of the restitution of the looted objects now held in the MVL.



Salma Ziblim, Michael Gyimah and Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan Iddi at the German cemetery in Yendi on 24 November 2022. Photo: Jan König

It should be emphasised here for future projects how important personal visits by researchers are in order to credibly demonstrate the museum's genuine willingness to come to terms with its colonial past, to create transparency about its holdings, and to proactively support restitution. Through the visit, Michael Gymiah, Ricarda Rivoir, and Jan König were able to build individual trusting relationships with several people, which now need to be maintained and further cultivated.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Friedrich von Bose, Ricarda Rivoir and Ohiniko Toffa

THE DAPHNE DATABASE AND THE SKD'S ONLINE COLLECTION

Since 2008, the SKD has been running the DAPHNE project, a comprehensive research, recording, and inventory project. The database of the same name, specially developed by the Dresden software company Robotron, holds records of the entire holdings of the museums of the SKD, comprising more than two million objects. Research on the objects in the museums is carried out on the basis of this data collection. The information collated in the database enables the legal status of the holdings to be evaluated and ensures transparency towards the outside world. The latter is of particular concern to the SKD, which launched the "Online Collection" (OC) based on the DAPHNE records in 2010.

In 2015, the SES, with its extensive collections, also became part of the DAPHNE project. Most of the work is expected to be completed in 2024, by which time all its holdings will have been incorporated into the database. A further goal is to make a large proportion of the recorded objects accessible to the public in the Online Collection. Open access is an important basis for cross-institutional provenance research projects, and particularly for ensuring that members of so-called societies of origin are able to access the relevant data. The latter also have the opportunity to request additional information on an object via the OC. Requests for restitution can also only be made on the basis of an insight into the existing holdings.

Critical handling of racist language in the databases and the Online Collection

The use of racism-critical and discrimination-sensitive language in the description of objects is a declared goal of all SKD institutions. This is also an ongoing process in which responses, given via the feedback function that is available with every object, are valuable and useful. If discriminatory terms cannot be avoided because they are part of the title assigned by the artist, or belong to well-known traditional designations, the database offers the function of hiding these words online and replacing them with three asterisks as placeholders, accompanied by a note explaining why. In each case, users of the OC can decide for themselves whether they wish to have these terms displayed or not.



Disclaimer for discriminatory language in the Online Collection, the respective word being hidden with asterisks. Online Collection of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Duty of care in relation to object photographs in the Online Collection

Ohiniko Toffa and Emery Patrick Effiboley were instrumental in the decision not to include photographs of any of the investigated “objects” either in the OC or in the project report. Emery Patrick Effiboley, for example, argued that publishing photographs of the objects might reinforce racist stereotypes and the perception of people from Togo as backward. For the objects selected for the project, we therefore decided to insert a placeholder image, accompanied by a note pointing out this special duty of care, instead of showing the photo. If there is justified interest, the images can be requested via a contact form. For each “collection assemblage”, the placeholder is used for all the selected objects. They are therefore only published with their metadata and without a reproduction. Further development and differentiation of the placeholders using special “traditional knowledge labels” based on the DDB’s portal “Collections from Colonial Contexts”⁵ is currently being considered.

“Maker unknown to us”

An SES-specific adjustment has also been made with regard to the persons named in connection with each object. For the vast majority of objects, the individuals who acquired the objects are well documented, but the original owners and makers are known only in the rarest of cases. This imbalance is reflected in the museum documentation. For example, the name of the person who acquired the object (“collected by”) and the name of the person who gave the object to the museum (“received from”) were recorded on the catalogue cards, but not the name of the maker or previous owner. This illustrated the absence of institutional interest in this information and a disregard for the actors in the regions of origin. As a consequence, not only was undue credit given to the colonial actors (cf. Sprute 2023: 277), but the original owners continue to be made invisible by the commonly used phrase “maker unknown” in documentation systems.

5 See <https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/?lang=de>

Hauptkatalog. <i>MAf 11812.</i>	Jahr und No. der Sendung. <i>1906/41.</i>	Original-No. <i>62.</i>
Gegenstand. <i>Alte Staatsdrum uel. Nbo zu hoch Oben mit 3 Schädeldecken befestigt. Die Tromme ist bemalt mit Schwarz-weiß-rot bemalt.</i>	Volk.	Oertlichkeit. <i>Abele.</i>
Standort.	Von wem gesammelt.	Von wem erhalten. <i>J. M. H. H. H.</i>
	Art der Erwerbung.	<i>Geoh.</i>

Illustration of the catalogue card for a drum inventoried under [MAf 11812](#). GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

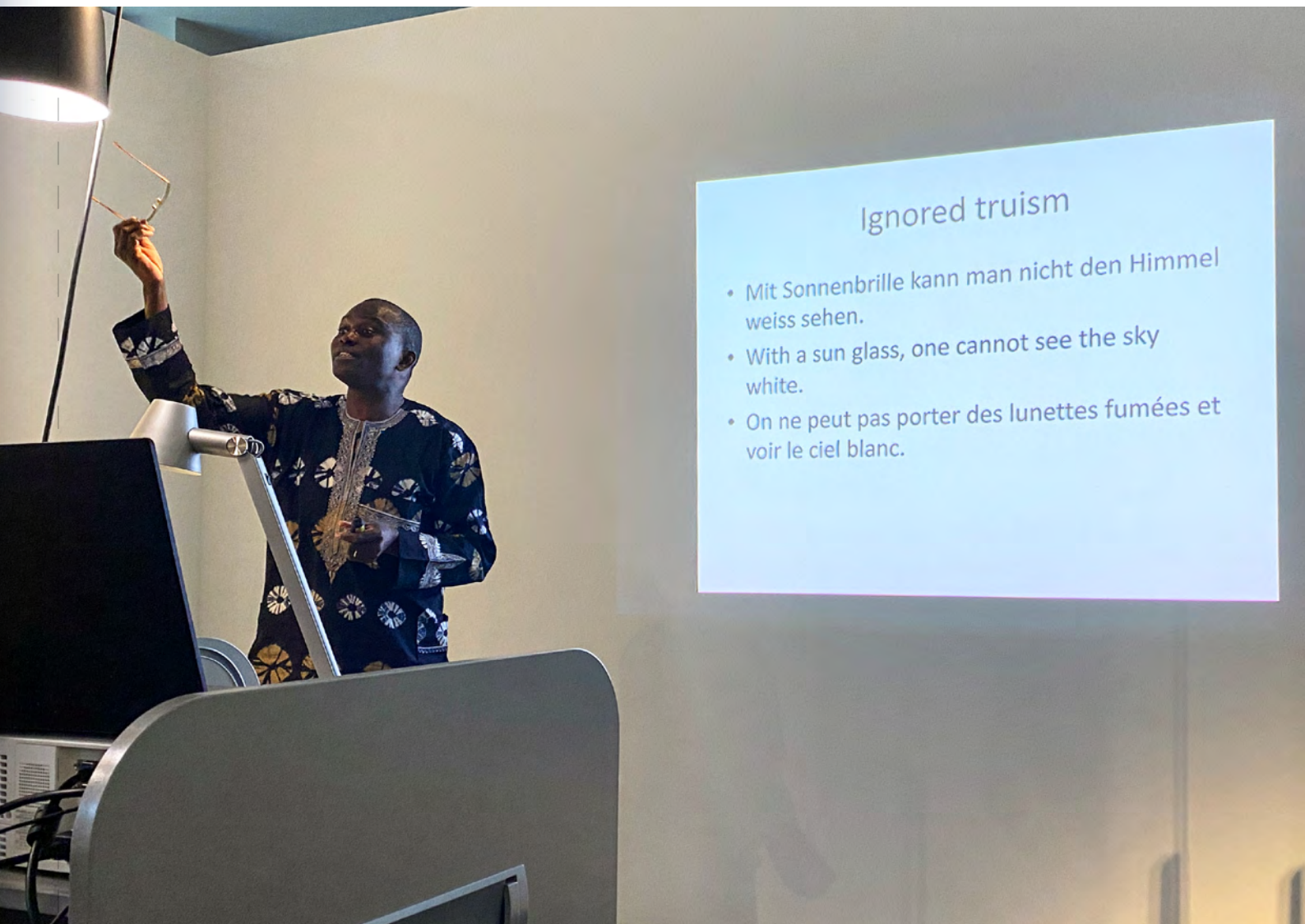
In order to highlight this shortcoming and the associated lack of knowledge, and so as not to associate the objects exclusively with the Europeans who previously owned them, we will soon place the statement “Maker unknown to us” at the top of all entries relating to objects whose makers are not recorded and whom we have so far been unable to identify.

Friedrich von Bose and Katja Hofmann (Scientific editor of the DAPHNE Project)

OUTREACH FORMATS

An important aspect of the work throughout the project has been engagement in various forms of public relations and outreach work. On the one hand, this was to create transparency about our work, which is why, in most cases, we responded to media enquiries. In doing so, we hoped to develop a critical public awareness of the collections from the former colony of Togo held in the museum. The discussion events organised at the museum during the project period, along with lectures by guest speakers and contributions to panel discussions at other institutions, as well as media coverage (press, TV), are listed on the research channel of the SKD.⁶ Media articles, where available, can be accessed directly.

Prep Room Talk “Repatriation of African Cultural Objects and Implications/Challenges/Lessons for European Societies” with Emery Patrick Effiboley on 24 May 2022. Photo: Friedrich von Bose



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A list of all events and features can be found here: <https://forschung.skd.museum/projekte/detail/provenienz-von-kolonialzeitlichen-sammlungen-aus-togo/>



Film shooting by the MDR for the documentary “Stolen Heritage”, broadcasted from 15 December 2022.
Photo: Friedrich von Bose

On the other hand, we also saw the public presentation and discussion of our research concerns and objectives as an opportunity to pose questions in a different, public way, beyond the routine work of our project, and to put these up for discussion. One project that stood out was the exhibition in the Prep Room, which opened in October 2022.

Friedrich von Bose

Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: THE PROJECT IN THE “PREP ROOM”

A substantial proportion of the transparency measures were taken in connection with the programme [REINVENTING GRASSI.SKD](#) at the MVL. This programme, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, envisages a far-reaching transformation of the Leipzig museum.

In the “Prep Room” – a special area of the exhibition that was partially opened in March 2022 – Ricarda Rivoir and Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, in collaboration with the project team, curated two exhibition modules in which questions, research processes, and initial outcomes of the project were presented.

The Prep Room is part of the “backstage” area, where insights are given into the otherwise mostly hidden aspects of museum work. The Prep Room was inspired by Siddharta Perez’s work at the National University of Singapore Museum (NUS Museum), where she launched the award-winning “[prep-room](#)” format in 2011. The Prep Room at the Leipzig museum is conceived as a space for explorative curating in which discussions can be initiated and new projects can emerge. The first guest researchers, the Berlin academics Anna Szöke and Franka Schneider, addressed questions about the museum’s handling of historical ordering systems and colonial classifications under the title “About Subjects, Objects, and In-Between”.

The first small display in the context of this Prep Room project concerned the headdress from present-day Ghana, which was formerly a *subject* of social relations as part of the reality of West African life, and which, as a result of its violent appropriation, had lain as a museum *object*, mostly hidden away in a box in the storeroom, for more than 120 years. For four months, we exhibited it in its unrestored state, lying on a storeroom cardboard box, in order to draw attention to its history and to the difficult task of determining its provenance.

In October 2022, together with Friedrich von Bose, we developed another exhibition module that covered a larger section of the Prep Room. The aim was to inform visitors in more detail about the ongoing research work and to address the colonial history of Togo, which has not been the subject of much public discussion in Germany up to now. In addition, we focused on the question of how we can make exhibition practice itself fruitful as part of research. In doing so, we tried out different display formats. The research character of the exhibition was reflected, among other things, in the presentation in the space of all the sources used.



Watercolour illustration of the *Gboyno Zipligu* by Madóu Ghosh in the exhibition “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”, opened 5 October 2022. Illustration: Madóu Ghosh on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Using a watercolour illustration (Madóu Ghosh) of the above-mentioned headdress, we developed a research mind map showing the various meanings attributed to it by previous owners and by museum staff. By removing the headdress from the view of the visitors, we raised questions about the display of evidence of colonial violence and sought alternatives to the presentation of the object.

In a wall installation, we traced the routes taken by the colonial military actors in the former colony on a present-day map of Togo. Through places being literally tied together – we used string to trace the routes on the wall – it was possible to show not only the large number of German war campaigns in a tangible, haptic way, but also to make the nodes of the colonial infrastructure and the specific moments of the appropriation of objects stand out in a material way. By presenting this on a modern map, it was possible to see this in relation to the reality of today’s national borders.

Wall installation of the routes of the colonial military actors on a current map of Togo in the exhibition “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”, opened 5 October 2022. Photo: Friedrich von Bose



From this, we were again able to draw relevant information for the project research. In addition, together with Toni Hanel, we compiled personal profiles of the colonial actors (see Online Collection), some of which provided detailed information on their respective campaigns and looting, including extracts from archival documents.

Furthermore, it dealt with the complexity of colonial violence in connection with the appropriation of objects. For this purpose, together with Julia Pfau, Emery Patrick Effiboley, and Ohiniko Toffa, we selected four objects that most likely did not originate from a definitive context of looting, but were, for example, commissioned.

Visitors to the exhibition also had the opportunity to play the “Entry Game” designed by the two interns Lena Laros and Malin Burlatis. The game gave children and young people, in particular, an insight into the work of provenance researchers and showed which materials and resources are relevant for provenance research.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes and Ricarda Rivoir

Exhibition “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”, opened 5 October 2022. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig



III.

DOCUMENTATION

OF PROJECT

OUTCOMES

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

General background

The historical context that is relevant for researching the provenance of objects in the relevant collections at the MVD and MVL is that of German colonial history in Togo. This can be divided into three important phases in the establishment of German rule (Sebald 1988):

- “1884–1894: The early stages of German colonial rule on the Togo coast – the decade of colonial phoney peace” (Sebald 1988: 49f.)
- “1894/95–1900: The conquest of the hinterland and establishment of colonial rule throughout the Togo colony” (ibid.: 153f.)
- “1900–1914: Togo under the conditions of imperialist colonial policy” (ibid.: 231f.).

The collections investigated in this research project most likely date back to all three of these phases. As has also been pointed out in recent publications dealing with comparable ethnographic holdings (Künkler 2022, Hüsgen 2020), the history of these collections can therefore be fundamentally regarded as colonial history.

The foundations were laid in the first phase of the establishment of colonial rule, starting in 1884. Sebald argues that Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck learned much from the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885: “Leopold II, King of the Belgians, had demonstrated how – under the guise of scientific expeditions in the Congo area – colonial annexations could be prepared and carried out” (Sebald 1988: 52). With this in mind, in 1887 Bismarck commissioned Curt von François and Dr. Ludwig Wolf to “conduct ‘scientific expeditions’ and establish stations in the hinterland of the Togo coast. Following the example set by the Congo coast, as large a part of central West Africa as possible was thereby to be added to the German colonial empire” (ibid.: 52). It was against this background that the first project was drawn up for undertaking a “hinterland expedition”⁷ in Togo in 1887 and 1888. After Bismarck’s death in 1898, the Imperial Commissioner Jesko von Puttkamer developed new political plans to continue the appropriation of territory. After protracted political discussions, he succeeded in organising and initiating another “hinterland expedition” to open up the interior of the country in 1894 and 1895. Dr. Hans Gruner was recruited to lead that expedition (Sebald 1997: 23f.).

This heralded the second phase of the establishment of rule, which was characterised by violent expeditions of exploration and annexation leading into the interior of the country. These so-called expeditions into Togo’s “hinterland” were partly planned and conducted as “research trips” within the framework of colonial policy in Togo.

7 This is a term taken from colonial law (Hüsgen 2020: 4).



The former German military station in Yendi, which the YHRC plans to restore and use as a cultural centre. From left to right: Iddrisu Mohammed Alimanche, Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan Iddi's son, Michael Gyimah, Salma Ziblim, Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan Iddi, Wiqaya Alhassan, Ricarda Rivoir and Salma Ziblim's assistant, 24 November 2022. Photo: Jan König

Hence, the leader of the “German Togo Hinterland Expedition” in 1894 and 1895, Hans Gruner, explained in his memoirs published by Sebald:

“For the most part, the expedition pursued purely political goals, namely the enlargement of Togo, which was necessary for its prosperity. But it also undertook scientific exploration of the new territories as a basis for later economic development. First and foremost, the focus was on geographical exploration of these hitherto almost unknown territories” (ibid.: 48).

The “German Togo Hinterland Expedition” (DTE) as a context of appropriation

In his article on the DTE (1894–95), Jan Hüsgen introduced it into the academic discussion as a “collecting context” (Hüsgen 2020). The procuring of material cultural artefacts in the colony of Togo and their shipment to the German Empire as “ethnographic objects” took place, among other things, in the context of these research expeditions conducted as part of colonial policy. This “collecting” of ethnographic objects was part of systematic academic practice in the colony of “Togoland” at the time; it was incorporated into “race”-based anthropological theories and was intended to justify German colonial policy (Seemann 2012: 53ff.). An example of this is also the collections of the aristocrat

Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg (1873–1969), which Diebold locates between “court culture, exoticism and colonialism”, emphasising the “colonial propagandist significance of research trips” and their contribution to a racist structure of domination (Diebold 2019). Seemann analyses the political career of Count Julius Zech in Togo. His policy of ‘Volkskultur’ marked a salient point in German colonial cultural policy in Togo (2012: 57). Hence, the procurement of material cultural items was an integral part of the practice of colonial rule, which extended into many ethnographic museums in the German Empire.

In 1886, the Imperial Government in Togo supported the “collection efforts of the Handelsmuseum Frankfurt am Main” (BArch, R150/179). There is also evidence of various contacts between the Imperial Government in Togo and many “scientific institutions” in the Wilhelmine Empire between 1907 and 1913. These include the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin, the Königliches Zoologisches Museum Berlin, the Hamburg Kolonialinstitut, the Deutsche Seefischerei-Verein Berlin, the Deutsches Museum in Munich and the Königliche Geologische Landesanstalt in Berlin (BArch, R150/31).

The violent character of colonial object acquisition cannot only be described as an epistemic form of violence, but was often also actually physically brutal (Künkler 2022: 9–20). German colonisers were irritated when populations rejected annexation by Germany – under what was euphemistically called a “protection treaty” – or if they showed any affection for the French or the British, or expressed a desire for independence. The disaffected were then subjected to “punitive” measures. As Valentin von Massow noted in his diary, it was important to avoid destroying the “reputation of the white man and the authority of the German government” (Sebald 2014: 541).

Outline of the collections in relation to their historical context, illustrated by examples

The holdings researched in this project are exemplary illustrations of this colonial policy of expropriation and domination. The objects procured by Hans Gruner, Valentin von Massow, and Gaston Thierry can largely be traced back directly to the violent “punitive expeditions” led by them. For example, at the beginning of the DTE, Gruner arrested the priest Obosomfo of Kete Krachi [Kete-Kratschi] and had him executed (Sebald 1997: 395). His body was then decapitated and his head sent to Berlin. Gruner confiscated Obosomfo’s property and thus began his “ethnographic collecting” (Künkler 2022: 27). Similarly, having been accused of expressing anti-German sentiments, “King Tschampa” of Akebu had also already been beheaded by Ludwig Wolf in 1887, and his head was likewise sent to Berlin (Künkler 2022, Toffa/Imani 2022, Oloukpona-Yinnon 1995).

A further context of appropriation is the war against the Tové in the south of the colony in 1895 (cf. Künkler 2022: 30, Oloukpona-Yinnon: 2000: 481–487, 1995: 399–417, Sebald 1988: 168, Trierenberg 1914: 171ff., Klose 1899: 162–165). Hüsgen (2020) has already described Ernst Baumann’s actions during the war as looting. At the MVL, it has been possible to attribute two drums ([MAf 02927](#) and [MAf 02928](#)) from Adolf Diehl’s collection to the same context, so that they may potentially be linked to Baumann’s looting.

Among the objects transferred to the MVL by Gaston Thierry are the possessions of King Biema Asabiè. The circumstances under which Thierry, during his time as station director at Sansanné-Mango [Sansanne-Mangu], shot the king in early November 1897, stole his possessions and shipped them to the Empire, where they were subsequently divided between various ethnographic museums in Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart and others, have been researched by LeGall, Aguigah, and Wagne (2023).

In the Adam Mischlich collection from 1902, there are religious objects of the *Dente* from Kete Krachi, whose priest was Obosomfo, who was executed by Hans Gruner. There were also numerous “punitive expeditions” during this period. Among many others, these included the campaigns against the Dagomba (1896, 1900), against the Kabiye (1898) and the Bassari (1897) (cf. Trierenberg 1914: 93ff.).

In addition, Adolf Diehl’s and Harry Grunitzky’s collections, which were related to trading activities in the colony, show further aspects of how objects were procured. They endorse the assumption that trade and profit were the basis for colonial policy. Otto von Bismarck, chancellor of the German Empire at the time, stated that, “the flag follows trade” (Ahadji 1984: 2). This principle was the basis for the founding of the colony of Togo, because some German trading companies were already active in the region, such as the Woermann shipping company from Hamburg (Herrfurth 1909: 118). The collections created by colonial traders should also be considered in this context; they too were created in the context of colonial oppression and exploitation. Notes by Diehl, for example, which can be traced through historical catalogue cards, show that “objects” came from a man killed in the war. These and other documents prove that he also had no scruples about purchasing war booty from colonial officers.

Ohiniko Toffa

THE EIGHT COLONIAL ACTORS: BIOGRAPHIES AND CONTEXTS OF APPROPRIATION

Ernst Friedrich Gütschow

1869 Rostock–1946 Bad Wildungen

From an academic point of view, little biographical information exists regarding Ernst Friedrich Gütschow (cf. Fröde 2017: 137f.). Nevertheless, some relevant details concerning his connection to the MVD were uncovered in the course of the project.

Before Ernst Gütschow settled in Dresden in 1902, he spent about twelve years in the English-speaking world: first he completed a commercial apprenticeship in Manchester (UK) and then he took his first steps in business, taking up a position in the tobacco industry in San Francisco in 1893. Once in Dresden, he not only became general manager of the city's second largest tobacco company, but also began to use his financial capital to embark on a wide range of activities as a patron of the arts and culture. The agenda behind this seems to have been exclusively personal gain: he was concerned with the accumulation of prestige and public attention, which manifested itself, for example, in his negotiations with the MVD in the hope of being awarded an honour (cf. Edenheiser/ Gißibl 2021: 176). He stated that the price for the collection was too high, but that he might be persuaded to purchase it for the museum anyway if he received a medal (cf. SächsStA-D, 13890 Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, No. 17: 169r.).

In this case, Gütschow profited from the colonial power structures of his time; on the one hand, because he was able to purchase this group of objects from the colony "Togoland" in the German capital, and on the other hand, because his acquisition of the collection on behalf of the museum resulted in his being awarded a medal, which enhanced his social prestige. There is no evidence of further connections to colonial activities or even of any involvement on his part. Gütschow, who collected cultural objects from all over the world and was active in several influential spheres, rather appears to have been a typical representative of his professional class. He was a member of the mercantile bourgeoisie, which in the rapidly rising industrial nation of Germany was primarily made up of individuals who presented themselves as high-achieving entrepreneurs with a willingness to take risks. They had the desire to publicly demonstrate their economic success, distancing themselves from the lower ranks and visibly displaying their purchasing power (cf. Ullrich 2014: 280-284).

Toni Hanel

Gütschow: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

In 1910, Ernst Gütschow donated an extensive collection to the MVD, among which are objects from various parts of West Africa, including Cameroon and Togo (MVD E/G103 1910, Ernst Gütschow). A large proportion of the objects are typical market wares of the time, including contemporary handicrafts and textiles. For the research project, the 196 objects from the former German colony of Togo were relevant. They include a large number of objects of a religious nature, such as *Legbawo* or *Legba* (see chapter “*Legba*”) made of clay, *Dzokawo* – protective amulets worn on the body (Meyer 2021) – and *Aklamawo*, which represent personal protective spirits or deities (Toffa 2019).

Information about this transaction was found in the Saxon State Archives. For example, on 6 October 1910, the former museum director Arnold Jacobi sent an initial letter to the Director-General of the *Königliche Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft* (Royal Collections for Art and Science) providing detailed information. In this letter, he requested support for the purchase of the collection, which he talked up in the following terms:

“It is a unique collection of cultic and magic objects – fetishes, dance masks, amulets, incantation instruments, and suchlike, which will hardly be possible to acquire again as such a complete group, because the encroaching white culture and mission activities are rapidly sweeping away the old traditions in the small areas. Also included is a collection of arts and crafts products of the Hausa, the Sudanese trading people, who are likewise hardly represented in our museum.”
(SächsStA-D, 13890 Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, No. 17: 169r.).

This quotation, specifying the objects to be acquired, clearly shows how the museum’s “collecting policy” was predicated on the paradigm of salvage anthropology. Driven by the idea of being able to investigate the respective societies on the basis of material cultural objects as abstract carriers of knowledge, ethnographers strove to acquire as many of them as possible for the museum. Moreover, this was to be done as quickly as possible in order to preserve at least the supposed originality of the objects before this, it was assumed, was damaged in the course of European colonisation and missionisation (Brandstetter 2019: 53ff., cf. also Penny 2002). In addition, in this passage Jacobi utilises the associated concept of ‘completeness’ of collections as an ideal to be striven for. This was based on the idea that societies could be depicted in their entirety if the totality of their material culture was available for study (Brandstetter 2019: 55, cf. also Zimmerman 2001: 6).

Jacobi’s letter also reveals that the impetus behind the donation was a particular desire on the part of Gütschow. Only the prospect of being awarded the Royal Saxon Order of Albrecht⁸ would be sufficient to persuade Gütschow to offer his collection to the museum as a gift.

8 The Saxon Order of Albrecht was awarded as a distinction for special achievements in the fields of the state, science, and art. The honour was usually conferred by the King himself, with the bureaucratic act behind it being prepared by the Order Chancellery, an authority of the Ministry of the Royal Household. In this specific example, Gütschow was decorated on account of a donation to the MVD, which, as part of the *Königliche Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft*, belonged to the fideicommissum of the House of Wettin and was thus effectively the private property of the royal family (Dresdner Journal, No. 255 of 3 Nov. 1910: 1).

Jacobi had previously considered the price of 5,000 Marks to be too high (SächsStA-D, 13890 Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, No. 17: 169-178). The mutual benefit of the arrangement becomes clear in the following excerpt from Jacobi's letter:

"I therefore urged Mr Gütschow to preserve this collection for Dresden as well, but in view of the price he was not very keen. At best, he would decide to do so if I could offer him the prospect of being nominated for a medal. [...] [O]n the other hand, the scientific value of the Togo collection is far greater than the purchase price would suggest, and his willingness to help would be all the more significant, since I have no other way of averting the loss to us. Neither my predecessor nor I have yet succeeded in obtaining objects from the colony of Togo, precisely because almost nothing appears on the market, so that I would be most reluctant to eschew this rare opportunity." (ibid.: 169)

Gütschow subsequently donated the collection to the MVD. On 28 October 1910 he was awarded the "Knight's Cross 1st Class of the Order of Albrecht" (ibid.: 177).

This clearly illustrates how the museum used its influence as an active agent in the milieu of colonial profiteers. In this case, Jacobi helped Gütschow improve his social standing and strengthened his position within the network (on the importance of the bestowal of honours for the expansion of the Lindenmuseum's collection, cf. Grimme 2018: 22). Gütschow, on the other hand, enabled the MVD to come into possession of a coveted collection that it would not otherwise have been able to acquire for financial reasons.

How the collection had come into Gütschow's possession in the first place, however, has not yet been established. At the present time, it is only known that he purchased it in Dresden from a person whose identity we have not been able to determine. A remark by Jacobi in the letter quoted above may provide a clue as to the background of that person. Jacobi pointed out to the Director-General that Prof. Dr. Hans Meyer, a patron of the Leipzig Museum, was also interested in the collection from Togo and urged that the Dresden museum should get in ahead of him (SächsStA-D, 13890 Generaldirektion der Königlichen Sammlungen für Kunst und Wissenschaft, No. 17: 169f.).

Both Meyer and Gütschow were in contact with Dr. Alfred Mansfeld (1870–1932), from whom Gütschow had acquired the collection from Cameroon for the MVD. Mansfeld was active in the colonial service from 1904 and worked as chief medical officer and district administrator in Ossidinge (Cameroon) (cf. Michels 2004). Mansfeld had also put Harry Grunitzky in touch with the MVL (MVL 1911/99: 3, Harry Grunitzky, see chapter on Harry Grunitzky). These connections suggest that these actors were part of a close-knit network, which also included the person from whom Gütschow had acquired the collection from Togo. There are no clear indications as to how the unknown person from whom Gütschow had acquired the collection had come into its possession. However, the fact that especially the objects from Togo in the Gütschow collection that have a religious reference are provided with very precise original name designations in one of the numerous Ewe dialects as well as explanations of meaning in English provides an indirect clue.

The disclosure of this sensitive information to outside persons may indicate a loss of meaning and help explain the release. A giving away or even a sale together with the corresponding information is not excluded.

The history of the collection traced here makes it clear that the appropriation and resale of objects was closely related to the trade networks in the German Empire. The people discussed here were sometimes not directly involved in German colonial policy, but they took advantage of it for their business interests. Further research on the business relationships between Gütschow, Hans Meyer, Alfred Mansfeld and Harry Grunitzky is necessary to understand this network and its importance in the German colonial metropolis, Berlin.

Friedrich von Bose, Silvia Dolz, Toni Hanel, Ricarda Rivoir and Ohiniko Toffa

Ferdinand Oskar Marx

1862–1924 Dresden

Over the course of the project, less information was discovered regarding Ferdinand Oskar Marx, and the provenance of the collection associated with him at the MVD, than about any of the other figures under discussion here. It was only possible to reconstruct the basic data relating to his stay in the colony.

In a letter dated 22 July 1895 from the Kaiserliche Oberpostdirektion Dresden to the Kaiserliches Postamt in Berlin, it was stated that Marx had applied for service in the colony and was therefore undergoing training in telegraph and telephone construction (SächsStA-D, 11225 Oberpostdirektion Dresden, No. 562 Kolonialdienst 1892–1907, letter of 22 July 1895). It is well documented that on 10 March 1896 he boarded a ship of the Woermann Line heading for Lomé (Leipziger Tageblatt und Handelszeitung 1896: 2019, Deutsche Kolonialzeitung 1896: 93, Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Bestand: 373-7 I, VIII: 173). By mid-1898 at the latest, he returned to Dresden, where he became engaged in July 1898 (Leipziger Tageblatt und Handelszeitung 1898: 5639). All that can be proven about his stay in the colony, however, is that he is listed in the Deutsches Kolonial-Handbuch 1896 as being responsible for the postal agency and the telegraph in Lomé as well as the telephone to Aného [Klein-Popo] (Fitzner 1896: 56), and that after the departure of his colleague Postsekretär Choms from Aného he was the only specialist postal and telegraph official remaining in the colony (ibid. 53, 409, ZMO, estate of Peter Sebald, letter dated 11.7.1896 from Klein Popo in [GA 5082]).

Toni Hanel

Marx: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

The assemblage attributed to Ferdinand Oskar Marx comprises 27 objects from the south of present-day Togo, where the postal and telegraph employee was involved in the construction of the telegraph line between Lomé and Aného. The items are everyday objects as well as ritual objects that were in use on the coast of Lomé and Aného, as far as Anfoin. They also include historical photographs from the colony (see chapter “Historical Photographs”).

There is no reliable information on the exact origin of the assemblage that Marx’s wife, Elsa Marx, donated to the Dresden Museum from his estate in 1939 (MVD E/MO46 1939–1973, Oskar Marx). It is true that Marx was a profiteer of the colonial system, all the more so because he volunteered for colonial service. However, the collection initially remained in the private possession of the Dresden family for 40 years and only entered the museum 13 years after Marx’s death. This suggests that the objects tend to be private mementos of Marx’s stay in Togo and not, as with other people, collections that were primarily procured for museums – often on commission. The circumstances of their appropriation, however, remain unclear. Since most of the objects do not show any signs of use, the possibility of their acquisition at markets where handicraft and everyday products were offered is conceivable. A diary that Marx kept in 1896, which reportedly came into the possession of the MVD via his son on 10 April 1973 (ibid.: 5), is unfortunately no longer to be found there.

Toni Hanel and Ohiniko Toffa

Harry Grunitzky

1873 Hannover – 1912 Lomé

Fritz August Harry Grunitzky (1873–1912) worked as a merchant on the West African coast, primarily in Lomé, from 1897. From 1904 until his death – with interruptions due to visits to the German Empire – he represented the Hamburg import and export company “Boedecker & Meyer” as their agent and authorised signatory (Kaiserliches Gouvernement in Lomé 1910: 188f.). He was involved in the Lomé Government Council as a so-called extraofficial member from 1907 to 1912 (ibid.). His activities in Togo show how he benefited from colonialism and was able to enrich himself in many ways. The benefits included prospects of both financial gain and influence in senior positions in a business location where Europeans possessed clear advantages and were able to exploit the prevailing asymmetries. In addition, Grunitzky took advantage of the opportunity to procure objects and sell them at a profit to ethnographic museums in the German Empire.

Grunitzky fathered children with six different women in West Africa, some of whom were born within the same time period (Kouzan/Tsigbe 2020: 24f., Habermas 2016: 293). Unfortunately, we have not yet been able to establish the full names of the women. The women were Ayoko from Aného (five children), Hodjinga from Kete Krachi (two children), Otodopé from Eoué on the Gold Coast (one child), Nadou from Aného (one child),

Dédé from Lomé (one child) and finally Sossimé from Atakpamé (one child) (ibid.). His son with Sossimé, who may possibly have belonged to a royal family of Atakpamé (Cornevin 1969: 410), was Nicolas Grunitzky (1913–1969), who later became the first Prime Minister of the independent state of Togo (Habermas 2016).

Toni Hanel

Grunitzky: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

In 1911, the MVL acquired 278 objects from Harry Grunitzky. Of these, 224 are considered losses of war, so 54 are still present. Their geographical origin covers various regions of the colony. They include religious and political status objects, clothing, tools, weapons, musical instruments, household goods, and jewellery. 19 objects were selected for research in the project. Further purchases by the MVL from Grunitzky's estate were made via Julius Konietzko⁹ in 1917. However, all but five of those objects are considered to have been lost or destroyed as a result of the Second World War (MVL 1911/99 Harry Grunitzky, 1917/53 Konietzko/Grunitzky). Grunitzky was in correspondence with the MVL. The contact was mediated through Prof. Dr. Hermann Meyer, brother of Hans Meyer, who was at that time a member of the Verein für Erdkunde (Geographical Society) and a patron of the museum (MVL 1911/99: 3, Harry Grunitzky). On behalf of Karl Weule, Hermann Meyer specifically established contact with individuals who, by virtue of their position, had the opportunity to procure and send objects in which the museum was interested.

On 1 April 1911, Grunitzky informed the museum that he had “put together two collections of an ethnographic nature in Togo”, which he wanted to sell in their entirety for “approximately 10,000 Marks, including shipping and customs duties” (ibid.: 3ff.). The collection included items “concerning spiritual culture, especially fetishism (800 to 1000 numbers)” as well as “natural objects of economic life, hunting, agriculture, handicrafts, plus weapons, dance accoutrements, war drums, toys, garments, fabrics from the South, etc.” (ibid.: 3). Grunitzky also states that it was Alfred Mansfeld who put him in contact with the museum (ibid.). This was the aforementioned Dr. Alfred Mansfeld (see chapter on Ernst Friedrich Gütschow). The exact relationship between Mansfeld and Grunitzky and the network in which they were active must remain the subject of future research. Various negotiations between the MVL, Grunitzky, and Hermann Meyer eventually led to a price of 700 German Marks for the aforementioned collection (cf. MVL 1911/19: 1, 9, Harry Grunitzky). The purchase took place on 26 April 1911 (ibid.: 1), while Grunitzky was in Germany for the last time. There, he expressed the wish for a discussion with the director Karl Weule in order to receive “acquisition requests” from the museum, which he could specifically fulfil on future trips. There is no record of whether such a discussion actually took place (ibid.: 11, 14).

9 Julius Konietzko (1886–1952) was a merchant and widely networked “ethnographica dealer” who sold non-European objects to German museums and also travelled on their behalf to procure certain objects.

As a commercial agent for the import and export company “Bödecker & Meyer”, Harry Grunitzky already had contacts in the colonial trade network. He handed over his collection for Leipzig to the freight forwarding company “Homann Co.” based at Luisenstraße 5 in Hamburg. The latter subsequently confirmed the delivery of the ethnographic objects to the MVL (*ibid.*: 15).

On the museum’s catalogue cards, the sensitive objects in Grunitzky’s collection are assigned to various towns in Togo. In the chapters on the attributes of the god *Xɛbioso* and the *Lɛgba*, individual items among these objects are examined in more detail. These are particularly sensitive ritual objects that were usually not given away voluntarily. Mention should also be made here of a so-called “skull drum” ([MAf 20415](#)), which comes from Agbodrafo on the coast east of Lomé. This is a drum which incorporates a human skull. Due to the presence of ancestral remains, this is a particularly sensitive object.

The files examined in connection with the project do not contain any precise statements on the circumstances surrounding the appropriation of the individual objects. Only assumptions can be made about how Grunitzky came into possession of them. It is likely, for example, that as a merchant he purchased objects from other colonisers, exchanged them for other items, or received them as gifts. Especially in the case of the sensitive objects described above, it is likely that the transactions were accompanied by violence. Grunitzky may also have exploited his hierarchical relationships with the aforementioned six different women in the colony in order to obtain sensitive objects.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Toni Hanel and Ohiniko Toffa

Adolf Diehl

1870 Oppenheim bei Mainz – 1943 Darmstadt

Heinrich Hugo Adolf Diehl was born in Mainz in 1870 and grew up in Oppenheim. His parents were Dr. Johannes Julius Gustav Diehl (1837–1914) and Eleonore Laura Diehl (1844–1934). He had a brother named Julius (1858–1932) and a sister named Louise Helene Sophie (1879–1961). Another brother, named Franz, died at the age of one year. Diehl stayed in the then German colonial territories of Togo and Cameroon from about 1890 until 1911, working there mainly as a trader. He was one of the most successful private independent “ethnographica dealers” and was also active as a photographer (Brandstetter 2021). At the MVL, there are also some of the photographs he took in the German colonies. This suggests that he also generated profit by selling his colonial photographs.

In Togo, Diehl worked as a merchant, and towards the end of the nineteenth century he was the main agent of the Hamburg trading house “Wölber & Brohm”, which had branches on the coast (Sebald 2014: 94). He undertook various journeys, especially in southern and central Togo, sometimes travelling with Valentin von Massow (*ibid.*: 100). At an unknown date, he married a woman named Amaibah von Tinto. This was possibly the daughter of an Ewe authority, who is described on a catalogue card as “Manah of Porto Seguro” (today Agbodrafo). Diehl probably left Togo as early as 1900 or 1901.

From 1902, he was a member of the Society for Northwest Cameroon and in 1906 Director-General of this Society (Linden-Museum Stuttgart 2018: 82f.). He left his wife von Tinto behind in Cameroon in 1911. On 12 November 1913, Diehl married a German woman named Mathilde Grieser (1875–1959). In the same year, they both travelled to South Africa, where Diehl became a British prisoner of war for a year and was under British house arrest, along with his wife, until 1919 (MVL 1919/67: 3-7, Adolf Diehl).

Diehl was evidently interested in becoming part of museum, scientific, and ethnographic circles. For example, in 1899, he exhibited his “West African collection” in Wiesbaden (MVL BA/1900/40: 147ff., Adolf Diehl), he became a member of the Senckenberg Society for Nature Research in Frankfurt am Main (Senckenbergische Naturforschenden Gesellschaft 1913: 21), and in 1911, he also joined the Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnography and Prehistory (BGAEU 1911: membership card). After his return to Germany, Diehl moved and was active in colonial revisionist circles (Brandstetter 2021) and in 1936, gave a lecture on “Our Colonies” to the National Socialist organisation “Kraft durch Freude” (“Strength through Joy”). He lived with his mother and wife in Darmstadt from March 1920, later moving to Mainz. He died in 1943 in a hospital in Darmstadt (ibid.).

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes

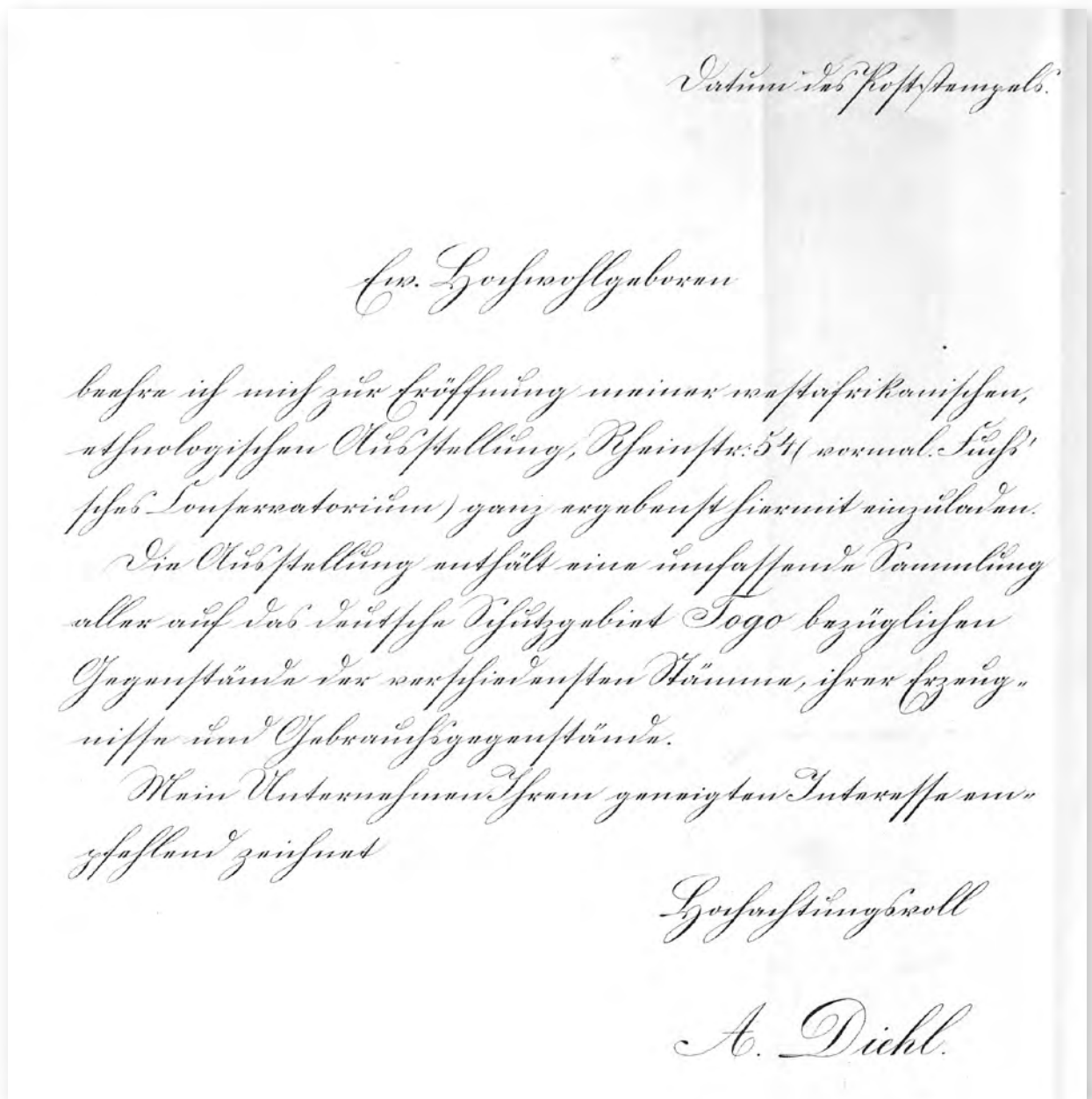
Diehl: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

Adolf Diehl supplied the MVL with objects and photographs in 1900 and 1919 (see chapter “Historical Photographs”) (MVL BA/1900/40, 1914/43, 1919/67, Adolf Diehl). The items which were part of the project research, derive from his private collection, which consisted of objects appropriated in the German colony of Togo (MVL BA/1900/40: 40, Adolf Diehl). Their acquisition by the MVL took place in connection with the exhibition of his collection at the Conservatorium at Rheinstraße 54 in Wiesbaden. Diehl sent a letter to the museum director Hermann Obst, inviting him to the exhibition:

“Dear Sir, I hereby humbly invite you to the opening of my West African ethnographic exhibition at Rheinstraße 54 (formerly Füchschen’s Conservatorium). The exhibition contains a comprehensive collection of all objects relating to the German protectorate of Togo, from a diverse range of tribes, their products and utensils.”
(MVL BA/1900/4: 147, Adolf Diehl)

The files contain precise details of the categories into which Diehl divided his collection: A “Musical instruments”, B “Jewellery”, C “War ornaments and weapons”, D “Weapons of other tribes”, E “Natural history objects”, F “Metalwork”, G “Weaving”, H “Carving and wickerwork”, J “Leatherwork”, K “Household objects and leatherwork”, L “Clothing”, M “Cultural objects” and N “Miscellaneous”. The exhibition catalogue also contains Diehl’s notes giving information on the provenance of individual objects and how they were acquired.

To advertise his “fetish” or “cultic” objects, Diehl wrote in his letter to the MVL of 24 August 1900: “I would like to mention that my collection contains a large number of fetish objects and implements that will no longer be available in the future due to the



MVL BA/1900/40: 147, Adolf Diehl. GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig,
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

destruction of the **fetish** villages". (MVL BA/1900/40: 151, Adolf Diehl) Obst sent his then research assistant Weule to view the exhibition. After examining the collection, the latter recommended purchasing the objects from the cultic section, the metalworking tools, the musical instruments, the pottery, and the weapons, in exchange for a reduced sum of 10,000 Marks (MVL BA/1900/40: 131, Adolf Diehl). Diehl accepted the offer on 29 September 1900 (ibid.: 135).

Today, 825 of Diehl's objects and photographs attributed to the former German colony of Togo are listed in the MVL's inventory. In 1900, the museum purchased 783 of these objects from Diehl; of these, 109 are currently considered war losses and one was given away. In 1914, when Adolf Diehl was in South Africa, Diehl's brother Julius sold 25 of

Adolf's photographs from Togo to the museum, without obtaining the latter's consent (MVL 1914/43, Julius Diehl). After Adolf Diehl returned to the German Empire in 1919, he asked Weule to return some objects to him and he was given 60 objects that had been set aside as mere decorative pieces (MVL 1919/67: 7-14, Adolf Diehl). During the same year, Diehl sold the MVL another 17 objects, one of which is currently considered a war loss.

According to the database, the Diehl collections at the MVL primarily consist of tools, weapons, textiles, political or so-called status objects, jewellery, instruments, household goods, vessels, objects from religious or spiritual contexts, and thus also non-public objects, as well as a human skull. Of these objects, it has been possible to ascribe 294 to the Akposso, Bassari, Dagomba, Ewe, Hausa, Kabiye, and Tchokossi. For about half of the collection, there is specific information regarding their potential place of origin or appropriation. The objects that Diehl transferred to the museum originate from present-day Bénin, Ghana, and Togo, among other places.

We selected 58 objects for provenance research. They include objects of the Ewe, Hausa, Dagomba, and Kabiye, as well as many that have not so far been assigned to any specific population group. We chose to focus our research on those objects that are categorised as weapons, hunting equipment, war clothing, or religious and so-called status objects, since the appropriation of these objects is likely to have been related to contexts of war and violence.

Diehl purchased some objects, for example those of the Dagomba, the Kabiye, and the Tové Ewe from the spoils of war acquired by other colonisers, for example from the estate of Valentin von Massow (see chapter "Campaign against the Dagomba", "The Campaign against the Kabiye" and "Drums from the campaign against Tové and the surrounding area"). Thus, Diehl's collection demonstrates how colonial traders and military colonial actors pursued common interests. Thanks to his work at "Wölber und Brohm", Diehl was also able to take advantage of colonial economic networks, through which he presumably had objects made on a large scale by local craftspeople with the intention of selling them on to German museums at a profit (Brandstetter 2021, Linden-Museum Stuttgart 2018: 42). Furthermore, Diehl's exhibition catalogue sometimes bears the note "imitation" (MVL BA/1900/40: 67, 73, Adolf Diehl). These are duplicates or copies that Diehl had made locally.

In the case of some objects, Diehl recorded in his notes that they had been found; for example, the drum [MAf 02963](#): "found in an abandoned house in Atakpame" (MVL BA/1900/40: 67, Adolf Diehl). With such objects, it can be deduced that Diehl appropriated them without authorisation. Other objects he probably procured through local intermediaries, one of whom may have been Amaibah von Tinto. According to the museum catalogue card, the "waist or wedding jewellery" ([MAf 02974](#)) selected for the project, which is said to have come from Agbodrafo [Porto Seguro], belonged "to the daughter of the old king Manah of Porto Seguro, who was granted to Diehl as a wife." Whether Amaibah von Tinto was indeed the king's daughter has not been conclusively determined, but it is very likely.

Hans Gruner

1865 Wahrenbrück in Brandenburg–1943 Jena

Johann Hans Gruner was born in Wahrenbrück on 10 March 1865 as the fifth child of an unknown pastor named Dietrich. He was then taken in by Julius Gruner, a master millwright from Jena. After completing his grammar school education, Hans Gruner studied mathematics, geography, and geology in Jena, Freiburg im Breisgau, and Leipzig, where he received his doctorate in 1891.

In 1892, Gruner joined the colonial service in the then German colony of Togo. He worked in Togo for a total of 22 years (1892–1914) (Zurstrassen 2005: 274, Sebald 1997: 11) and held various posts: he was station director at “Misahöhe” (1892–1896 and 1899–1914) and Sansanné-Mango [Sansanne-Mangu] (1896–1899), as well as being head of the “German Togo Hinterland Expedition” (1894–1895) (Sebald 1997: 12–22). From 1899 onwards, he was given the position of an imperial district official and privy councillor, as well as the chairmanship of the Land Commission (Zurstrassen 2005: 233, Sebald 1997: 8–12).

His activities reflect the close links between academic research and military conquest. The team that conducted the DTE consisted of Gruner as leader, the officer Ernst von Carnap-Quernheimb, and the physician Dr. med. Richard Doering, as well as numerous soldiers, servants, interpreters, and porters (Sebald 1997: 16, 34–37). The route taken by the “expedition” led from the station “Misahöhe” to Kete Krachi and Yendi (present-day Ghana), Sansanné-Mango (Togo), to Say [Sai] (Niger). From there, the route ran south to present-day Bénin, northeast to Gwandu [Gando] (Nigeria) and then back to Sansanné-Mango, where the DTE officially ended (ibid.: 14, 39, 46f.).

Gruner concluded so-called protection or trade agreements with local rulers, but these actually served to subjugate them. He conducted scientific research, during which he also procured large numbers of ethnographic objects and natural history specimens for museums (Hüsgen 2020: 1f., 6, 11, Habermas 2013: 37, Sebald 1997). When Gruner encountered resistance, he subdued people by force, ordered executions, and burned down entire villages (Sebald 1997: 318f., 396). The DTE was presented to the public as a scientific “research expedition”. This served as a cover for the real goal: German colonial expansion. At the same time, the British and French were also trying to conclude treaties with local rulers in these territories (ibid.: 14).

In the years 1896 to 1899, Gruner conducted several campaigns against the Dagomba, Nanumba, Bikpakpaam [Konkomba], Bassari, Bimoba [Moba], Baatombu [Barba], and Ho. Valentin von Massow and Gaston Thierry were also involved in some of them (see chapter “The Campaign against the Dagomba”). From 1900 onwards, campaigns no longer had to be reported and they are therefore generally poorly documented.

Gruner had various relationships with local women in the colony. It is said that at “Misahöhe” alone he had relationships with three women (Zurstrassen 2005: 87). He had a son, Johannes Kodjo, with a woman named Aku. Gruner was also married to Woegblo Nutsua, an Ewe, with whom he had another son, Hans Komlan. In 1912, he married a German woman

named Luise in the German Empire. Two more sons were born from this marriage, Hans Junior and Wilhelm (Adili 2012, Zurstrassen 2005: 274, Sebald 1997: 8).

The outbreak of the First World War put an end to Gruner's colonial service.¹⁰ After the war and Gruner's retirement, he and his wife returned to Jena, where he wrote his memoirs from 1938 until his death on 6 August 1943 (Sebald 1997: 8).¹¹ He also published some (popular-) scientific essays (ibid.: 11) and assisted authors such as Georg Trierenberg with their writing (Trierenberg 1914: IV).

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes

Gruner: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

In 1901, 1904, 1905, and 1914, Hans Gruner donated to the MVL a collection of objects originating from the then German colony of Togo or from neighbouring regions, which he must have acquired before the colonial borders were defined by Great Britain, France, and Germany in 1897. The letters held in the MVL's archive of documents relating to its collection show that in 1901, 1904, and 1914 the leader of the so-called DTE was in direct contact with Karl Weule, who was assistant director from 1899 and director of the MVL from 1907. Gruner also personally brought objects to the museum, for example in February 1904 (MVL 1901/34, 1904/12, 1914/37, Hans Gruner). On the basis of this correspondence, which contains lists of objects, as well as announcements of collecting intentions and visits by Gruner, we have been able to reconstruct the arrangements for these three donations of collections.

The question of the extent to which Gruner was specifically commissioned by Karl Weule to procure certain objects in the colony for the MVL cannot be conclusively answered on the basis of the available archival records. Although the fact that Gruner donated the objects to the museum might suggest that he was a so-called "Bevollmächtigter" (authorised representative) of the museum,¹² no confirmation of this could be found in the museum's yearbooks. The files from 1905 were destroyed during the Second World War, so we have less information on the collection that was donated in that year.

In 1966, the MVL acquired another of Gruner's collections from Anna and Berthold Weiss from Jena. Further research must be carried out on each of them in order to establish how the objects came into their possession. In a letter from the research assistant of the

10 Among other things, Hans Gruner subsequently worked in the War Raw Materials Department (R. K. A.) in Berlin. Further information on Gruner's activities in the department can be found in his archived papers: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Handschriftenabteilung (Manuscripts section), Nachl. 250, Mappe 60.

11 These were not published until 1997, edited by Peter Sebald.

12 Designating individuals as authorised representatives of the museum was a ploy used by the museum to circumvent the Bundesrat resolution which decreed that all objects obtained by colonial officials must be handed over to the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin. The museum and an authorised representative made unofficial and private arrangements regarding the acquisition of objects, which the authorised representative procured and donated directly to the museum (on the Bundesrat resolution, see Bergner 1996).

“Regional Department East Africa”, Peter Göbel, to Berthold Weiss, there is mention of “his father’s collection”. Further research must be done in Jena to find out how he was related to Hans Gruner and whether he was perhaps a son of Wilhelm Gruner, who had inherited the objects from his father (MVL 1966/19: 3-13, Anna Weiss).

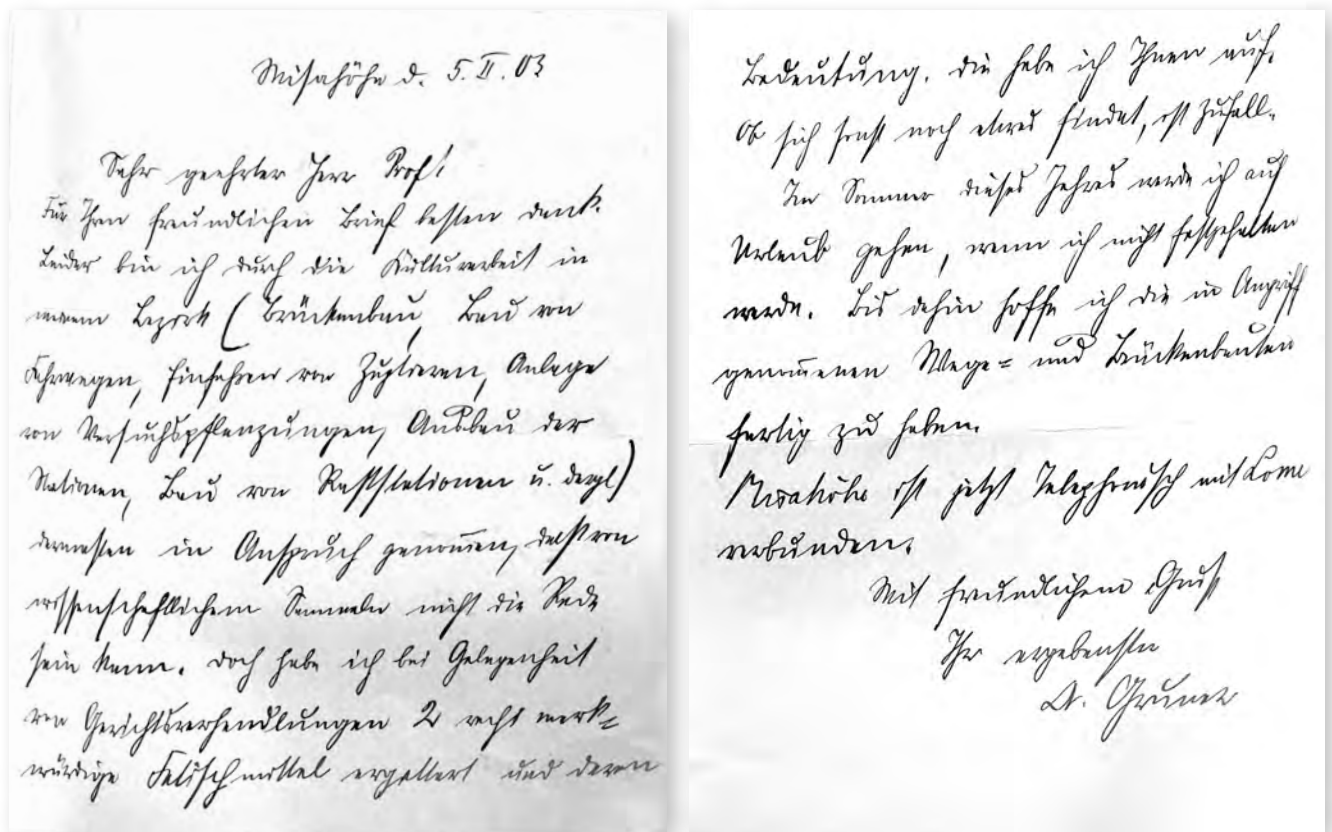
A total of 172 objects previously in Gruner’s possession came to the MVL. Of these, 18 are currently considered war losses. The attributions to specific population groups in the DAPHNE database are as follows: Baatombu, Bassari, Tchokossi/Anufo, Dagomba, Ewe, Fula, Gourmantché [Gurma], Hausa, Bikpakpaam, Bimoba and Mossi. There are 53 objects that have not yet been classified. In addition, it must also be assumed that there are some incorrect attributions. The majority are religious objects from various faith communities and political status objects from local authorities. Other objects include weapons, tools, receptacles, textiles, household goods, musical instruments, natural objects, jewellery, and toys.

Of the 154 extant objects that Gruner donated to the MVL, a total of 43 were selected for the project. The focus was placed on hunting equipment, weapons, war clothing, drums, and some of the *sokpé* stones (see chapter “The provenance of selected groups of objects”).

It has been possible to relate these objects to different contexts of appropriation. Some objects are evidently linked to the DTE on the basis of their date of acquisition and the region from which they derive. With regard to the drums, which probably represent political status objects or insignia, we could not conclusively determine whether they were given to Gruner in negotiations with local authorities during the DTE, or whether Gruner appropriated them in some other way. For other objects, there are statements in the files that Gruner obtained them by force. One example is the possessions of the priest Obosomfo of Kete Krachi, whom Gruner had executed at the beginning of the DTE. However, these went to the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin (Künkler 2022: 26f., Hüsgen 2020: 11) and are not at the MVL. Objects such as the weapons are presumably also connected with the numerous military operations against the local population and were looted after their subjugation. Spoils of war also frequently changed hands again, being exchanged, given away, or sold among the colonial actors. In the case of sensitive objects, i. e. religious objects or objects not intended to be seen in public, it is in most cases unlikely that they were handed over voluntarily.

Another context that Gruner could have employed in order to gain access to these sensitive objects was his relationships with women in the colony. In some cases, objects such as the *sokpé* were also described, in notes on the catalogue cards, as having been “found” by Gruner. In a letter to Karl Weule dated 5 February 1903, he writes:

“Unfortunately, I am so occupied by cultural work in my district [...] that there can be no question of scientific collecting. However, on the occasion of court hearings I managed to get hold of 2 rather strange fetish objects and their significance, I will save them for you.” (MVL 1904/12: 3f., Hans Gruner)



MVL 1904/12: 3f., Hans Gruner. GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig,
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Here it is clear that Gruner himself differentiated between “scientific collecting” and other forms of (forced) appropriation. His statement that he “got hold of” cultural objects in the context of court proceedings implies a colonial context of domination – a situation from which he profited directly, since it enabled him to procure objects on behalf of the museum.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes

Valentin von Massow

1864 Steinhöfel bei Fürstenwalde an der Spree–1899 Pénésoulou

The biography of Valentin von Massow is already exceptionally well researched. During his three years of colonial service, von Massow produced a handwritten diary of approximately 3,000 pages in which he recorded his activities and motivations in detail. Peter Sebald published this diary in 2014, supplemented by letters and official reports. In his diary, von Massow provided both a detailed chronology of events in the colony and insights into various aspects of the logic on which colonial rule was based. This information was invaluable for determining the provenance of objects investigated as part of the project.

Valentin Albrecht Ludwig August Hubertus von Massow was born on 3 November 1864 on the family estate at Steinhöfel, about 100 km east of Berlin, near Fürstenwalde an der Spree (Sebald 2014: 7). He came from a noble officer's family. Throughout his life, he maintained a close relationship with his mother Adelheid (1845–1912), who was widowed at an early age, and his sister Margarete (1868–1945). Von Massow embarked on a career as an army officer in the German Empire and, after travelling for two years through the British colony of India, enlisted for service in the German colony of Togo (1896–1899). Von Massow expected this to bring him rapid social advancement and financial security (ibid.: 13).

As commander of the police force and interim director of the “Bassari” station, he spent two years conducting campaigns of conquest in order to subjugate the population in the north of the colony. He reported the systematic burning of villages, looting, and massacres of the local population. His largest coordinated campaigns were against the Dagomba (23 November 1896–11 December 1896), the Bikpakpaam (20 November–13 December 1897, 14 December 1897–2 January 1898, 3–11 March 1898) and the Kabiye (21 January 1898–1 February 1898). He carried out smaller-scale military actions in the Bassar region during his period as station director there (26 September 1897–May 1898). Starting in July 1898, he was the leader of a “frontier expedition” to establish the colony's eastern and northern borders with the French colony of Dahomey. During this expedition, about a year later, on 23 July 1899, he died of blackwater fever, a complication of malaria treatment.

Von Massow mentioned two women to whom he claimed to have been married in the colony: at the beginning, for just a few weeks, a woman named Yaouva, and later the daughter of an allied Hausa named Amschiéto (ibid.: 493, 522).

After his death, his mother, Baroness Adelheid von Kuylenstjerna, arranged for his body and his belongings to be returned to the family estate at Steinhöfel near Fürstenwalde an der Spree (MVL 1899/38: 14, Valentin von Massow). Von Massow is buried in the cemetery there.

Ricarda Rivoir

Von Massow: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

Most of the objects left behind by Valentin von Massow were transferred from the colony to the MVL's collection. Some were sent to the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde zu Berlin, as well as to various other institutions such as the ethnographic collections in Stuttgart, Bremen, Cologne, Munich, Frankfurt, Hildesheim, and Hanover (I/MV 722, E 1231/00: 136). During the project, a great deal of information was uncovered which enabled the routes taken by these objects to be reconstructed.

For example, the diary of Oberleutnant Wilhelm Preil (1872–1906) shows that he cared for von Massow during his serious illness and sorted the latter's belongings a few days after his death: “Organised v. M's estate by separating official from private property.



Research mind map of the *Gboyno Ziplitu* in the exhibition “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”, opened 5 October 2022. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig

That took all day” (Sebald 2014: 823). Despite this, it is not very likely that he would have carried most of his many belongings with him during the border expedition; instead, he would have kept them in a fixed place. So far, however, no further information has come to light about this.

As already elucidated in the chapter “Diehl: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum”, Ohiniko Toffa has been able to prove that Diehl acquired part of von Massow’s estate during two auctions in the colony and later sold it to the MVL. Those objects for which von Massow is listed as the direct previous owner, on the other hand, came to the museum through transactions with his mother Baroness Marianne von Kuylenstjerna (ibid.: 7).

Von Massow’s mother was informed of her son’s death in 1899. As Ohiniko Toffa discovered in a letter to the then ruling governor of the colony of Togo, August Köhler, she complained about the treatment of her son’s estate. She requested that his estate be shipped at a cost 1000 Marks, to be paid by the colonial government (ZMO, Nachlass Peter Sebald, copy from Archives Nationales du Togo, Fonds Allemands, ANT, FA 1, N°416: 349f.). Who ultimately

covered the shipping costs is still unclear, but it seems likely that von Kuylentsjerna had to bear these expenses herself, since she stated in a letter that this was her reason for selling the objects to various museums (MVL 1899/38: 14, Valentin von Massow).

Letters in the archives of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin show that after her son's possessions arrived in Steinhöfel, von Kuylentsjerna contacted Felix von Luschan, then head of the Africa Department in Berlin, and asked him for assistance in administering them (I/MV 722, E 1231/00: 130f.). Von Massow had been in contact with von Luschan before his death and had already sent him a consignment (Sebald 2014: 582, E 442/1899). After von Luschan had selected about 30 objects himself (I/MV 722, E 1231/00: 134), he wrote to Karl Weule in Leipzig, drawing his attention to the objects in von Kuylentstjerna's care. In a letter dated 28 November 1899, he described "a large collection which the late Oberleutnant v. Massow had sent in. There were too many good Haussah-Mandingo and Bassari items in it, so that it might be worth your while...before Herr Antelmann takes up the matter" (MVL 1899/38: 3f., Valentin von Massow).

The MVL's document archives contain several letters from Baroness von Kuylentstjerna, which record in detail the establishment of contact and the process of arranging the purchase (ibid.). In December of the same year, Weule examined the collection and 255 objects were purchased. Among them were so-called "Haussa-Toben" (Hausa smocks), cartridge bags, headgear, and many other objects. Eleven more items, poisoned arrows, were donated by Kuylentstjerna to the museum in 1900 (MVL 1900/4: 3f., Valentin von Massow).¹³

The "von Massow Collection" was regarded by the museum as a "valuable addition to the contents of its African sections [...] and thus at the same time rarities of great ethnographic value" (Leipziger Tagblatt und Anzeige 1900: 5840). In the following decades, however, it received little attention. Today, 27 of the inventory numbers are listed as war losses.

Various records prove that von Massow captured a large proportion of the objects during his campaigns. This becomes abundantly clear in a letter to Felix von Luschan, in which he describes himself as a "collector" and his object appropriation activities as follows:

"During my 3 years of [...] activity here, I have been able to collect most of what I possess during rapid war campaigns and expeditions; it is therefore war booty and because I cannot identify each individual piece so precisely, [...] what I have collected is not of such high ethnographic value. As a soldier by profession, my war booty is also more valuable to me as a souvenir than it is for a collector who only collects for scientific purposes" (I/MV 721, E 442/1899: 114).

The assignment of the collections in the MVL to specific population groups shows a high degree of correlation with those against whom von Massow led campaigns. For example, it has been possible to identify objects originating from the Kabiye, Bassari, Bikpakpaam and Dagomba, which corresponds to the events described in the diary.

¹³ Bruno Antelmann was a merchant and the owner of the Deutsches Kolonialhaus in Berlin, which had branches in various cities in the German Empire (cf. Zeller 2002).

They can be traced back only to the various wars that von Massow conducted against these populations. In some cases, specific details of looting could be linked to objects in the MVL (see chapters “The Campaign against the Dagomba” and “The Campaign against the Kabiye”).

Ricarda Rivoir

Gaston Thierry

1866 München–1904 Mubi

Gaston Thierry was born in Munich on 17 July 1866 as the son of a merchant. After graduating from high school, he embarked on a military career in the Prussian army and navy. As early as 1894, he was temporarily deployed with the marines in Cameroon. From June 1896, he was in colonial service in Togo and took over as station director in Sansanné-Mango about six months later. Up to 1902, he used the station as a base for undertaking numerous campaigns of conquest to subjugate the population in the north of the colony. These included the campaign against the Dagomba on the way to Sansanné-Mango (23 November 1896–11 December 1896), campaigns in the Gurma region in present-day Burkina Faso (May–October 1897), campaigns against the villages of Diabiga [Djebija] and Matiakoali [Matyakuale, Matschakuale] (May–October 1897), campaigns against the Bikpakpaam (13 December 1897–3 January 1898), a campaign against the Kabiye (21 January–1 February 1898), a campaign against the Bimoba (late February–March 1898), a campaign in the Baatombu region (December 1898) and a campaign against Lamba (April 1899).

Von Massow wrote that Thierry led “a kind of family life” at Mango Station (Sebald 2014: 492). He had apparently “married in accordance with local custom, [his bride being] a Fullani girl [*sic*], Aba by name, who [is] still very young” (ibid.). Due to financial inconsistencies, the discovery of robberies for personal gain, and “unseemly conduct”, the then governor of the colony, August Köhler (1858–1902), initiated an internal investigation against Thierry in 1901. To avoid a political scandal, Thierry was transferred to Cameroon in 1902, which was tantamount to a promotion. There he took over the administration of the Yaoundé station from 1903 and in the same year was appointed head of the residency of the colonial administrative area of Adamaua, based in what is now Garoua.

On 16 September 1904, Thierry died during a battle near Mubi in what is now Adamawa State in eastern Nigeria, then part of the German colony of Cameroon. A year after his death, Thierry’s behaviour became the subject of a debate in the German parliament. His brutality towards the local population was used as an example of colonial crimes by Erzberger, the spokesman on colonial policy (Habermas 2016: 30f., Zurstrassen 2005: 256).

Thierry’s behaviour as a colonial officer has already been extensively researched and published (Aguigah/LeGall/Wagne 2023, Künkler 2022: 41, Lang/Nicklisch 2021: 157-165). Thierry was known for his brutal actions against the local population. In Sansanné-Mango, for example, he had the ruler Biema Asabiè shot on 2 October 1897

(Aguigah/LeGall/Wagne 2023). He also took advantage of his position to take possession of objects by force and to enrich himself financially by selling them. The records of Valentin von Massow show that he violently coerced the local population to accept the exchange of objects (cf. Sebald 2014: 799).

Ricarda Rivoir

Thierry: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

In 1900, the MVL purchased a total of 243 objects from the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin, which had previously acquired them from Gaston Thierry (MVL 1900/11, Gaston Thierry). Felix von Luschan brought Thierry into contact with the then directorial assistant of the MVL, Dr. Karl Weule. These are so-called “duplicates”, 19 of which are now considered war losses. 43 objects were selected for closer examination in the project, mostly weapons and other war-related objects.

In a note written on 27 April 1900, Karl Weule reported that: “Lieutenant Thierry is offering for sale (via the Berlin Museum) a fairly large collection from the hinterland of Togo. Purchased.” (MVL 1900/11: 1, Gaston Thierry) Von Luschan’s notes cite the general region of origin of this collection as “Sansane-Mangu”, where Thierry was station director between 1897 and 1902, with brief interruptions in Gurma. In addition, these writings prove that Thierry was acting at his “instigation”: “At my instigation, Lieutenant Gaston Thierry has assembled large ethnographic collections in the hinterland of Togo, in the area of Sansanne-Mangu” (I/MV 721, E903/1899, sheet 1). After negotiations between the ethnographic museums in Berlin and Leipzig, von Luschan and Weule agreed on a reduced amount of 1500 Marks (ibid.).

Thierry sent the Berlin museum a list of the object collections and a map of the places of origin. Von Luschan sent it to Leipzig on 22 February 1900 with the following note: “I take the liberty of sending the following list of the Thierry Collection to the Director’s office, with the request that it be returned to me as soon as it has been used.” (MVL 1900/11: 14, Gaston Thierry)

According to the information on the catalogue cards, the objects originate from the following regions or population groups: Tchokossi, Bimoba, Kantindi, Nadjaba, Baatombu, Bikpakpaam, Lamba, Kabiye. This corresponds to the areas where Thierry conducted the campaigns listed above. Knowing about his behaviour towards the local population and his brutal appropriation practices, it can be concluded that the collection is mainly war booty.

Ricarda Rivoir and Ohiniko Toffa

Adam Mischlich

1864 Nauheim bei Großgerau – 1948 Frankfurt am Main

Adam Mischlich was born on 28 March 1864 in Nauheim near Frankfurt am Main (Meyer-Bahlburg 1994). Between 1885 and 1890, he was trained at the Basel Mission House and was subsequently ordained as a clergyman. His first journey to West Africa took place a short time later. From 1890, he worked as a missionary for the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) until 1894, when he continued his missionary work in Worawora in the former German colony of Togo. As an Africanist and linguist, he undertook long journeys into the interior of the country and conducted linguistic studies in central and northern Togo. There are publications by Mischlich in missionary journals of the time and the “Mitteilungen aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten” (“Notices from the German protected areas”) (ibid.). His activities coincided with the time of the forcible development of the colony’s interior, for which his studies were utilised. Mischlich’s research on the Hausa language earned him the Volney Medal, a prize for comparative linguistics founded by the French philosopher Constantin François Volney.

After Mischlich resigned from the Basel mission in 1897 due to a scandal involving sexual offences (Erbar 1991: 29), he was recruited by the interim commissioner of the German colony of Togo, Jesko von Puttkamer, and a year later was appointed station director at Kete Krachi. As station director, he was responsible for the repression of the local population as well as the enforcement of colonial jurisdiction. In 1913, he took over the district administration of the “Misahöhe” station (Meyer-Bahlburg 1994). Mischlich retired from colonial service when the First World War broke out. He died in Praunheim in 1948 (Frankfurt am Main) (ibid.).

Ohiniko Toffa

Mischlich: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum

Transactions relating to the activities of Adam Mischlich took place during the period between 1901 and 1927. A total of 494 objects, 35 of them war losses, were registered at the start of the project. Over the course of the research project, we investigated 153 of them. Of all the individuals investigated as part of the project, Mischlich is the one with whom the MVL had the most intensive business contacts. Because of this, and because Mischlich sometimes donated objects to the MVL, it was reasonable to assume that he may have been an authorised representative of the museum (see chapter “Gruner: Circumstances of procurement and transfer to the museum”). However, the museum’s yearbooks do not provide any indication in that regard.

Mischlich was in correspondence with Karl Weule and donated one consignment from Togo to the museum in each of the years 1901, 1902, 1904, 1906 and 1927 (MVL 1901/61, Adam Mischlich, MVL 1901/70, Berliner Museum, MVL 1902/16, Berliner Völkerkundemuseum, MVL 1904/46, 1906/41, 1927/84, Adam Mischlich). In 1909, the MVL received two donations (MVL 1909/68, 1909/82, Adam Mischlich) and in 1916,

Mischlich even supplied objects to the museum three times (MVL 1916/9, 1916/11, 1916/12, Adam Mischlich). Mischlich used the shipping agent “R. Müller”, whose company headquarters were at Große Bleichen 3 in Hamburg.

Probably the first contact between Mischlich and the MVL was mediated by the then directorial assistant at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde zu Berlin, Dr. Felix von Luschan, in 1901. He offered twenty so-called “ethnographica” from the colony of Togo for 50 Marks, which the Leipzig museum subsequently purchased (MVL 1901/70: 1, 2, 7, Berlin Museum). A second purchase of so-called “Dubletten” (duplicates) from the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin took place as early as spring 1902 (MVL 1902/16: 1, Berliner Völkerkundemuseum). Among them were [MAf 07429](#), “an armchair from Bombata near Krachi”, as well as [MAf 07423 a, b](#), [07424 a, b](#) and [07425 a, b](#), the “fetishes okra and kanakra from Krachi” (MVL 1902/16: 11, Berliner Völkerkundemuseum). These religious objects are associated with the *Dente* faith community, as are the objects for which Mischlich used the term “Odom” ([MAf 09595](#), [MAf 09596](#), [MAf 09597](#), [MAf 09598](#), [MAf 09599](#), [MAf 09600](#), [MAf 09601](#), [MAf 09606](#), see chapter “‘Odom’ attributes”). In 1904, Mischlich sent a further consignment containing several objects that were supposedly connected with “Odom” directly to the MVL. In 1905, he sent the most extensive collection to the museum. It comprised 91 objects ([MAf 11847](#)–MAf 11937), all of which were said to come from the *Fofie* faith community (MVL 1906/41: 63, Adam Mischlich, see chapter “Attributes of the *Fofie*”).

Working room at the storages. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig



The groups of objects at the MVL that were procured by Mischlich on behalf of the MVL date back to his time as *Bezirksleiter* (district governor) in Kete Krachi. In terms of object appropriations, his function as *Bezirksleiter* and missionary was significant. Missionisation and Christianisation often went hand in hand with the practice of removing anything that was of value for the faith of the local population, including sacred objects (Bozsa 2019: 5f., Corbey/Weener 2015). In his letters archived at the MVL, Mischlich explicitly states that he appropriated the religious objects of the *Fofie* faith community “employing [...] cunning” (MVL 1906/41: 63, Adam Mischlich). The example of Mischlich demonstrates how the knowledge and networks of missionaries could be used to promote colonial rule and to procure objects for museums.

Ohiniko Toffa

THE PROVENANCE OF SELECTED GROUPS OF OBJECTS

Drums from the campaign against Tové and the surrounding area

Under the MVL inventory numbers [MAf 02927](#) and [MAf 02928](#), two drums are listed which most probably come from Tové [Towe], 100 km north of Lomé. On the catalogue card for [MAf 02927](#) there is a note reading: “allegedly Towe. Captured in the uprising of 1895. It belongs to a staff as an attribute of the warrior calling on people to participate in the war. (Diehl)”¹⁴ The so-called Tové Uprising is dated from 11 March to 3 April 1895. The colonial actors involved were Ernst Baumann, who had taken over from Hans Gruner as station director at “Misahöhe”, the Togo police force under the command of Sergeant and Police Master Gerlach, and the two persons designated as “Technician Stöhr” and as “Gardener Zorn”. However, the war was not triggered by an uprising of the colonised people. Rather, the colonial rulers’ intention was to secure the regions along the route from Lomé to the “Misahöhe” station, which was an important military and trade route for the Germans, and to enforce colonial sovereignty in the surrounding area. Thus, Tové was also to be placed under the administration of the “Misahöhe” station:

“Before the start of the campaign, the population of Towe, perceived by the colonialists as ‘insolent’ and thus in conflict with the Misahöhe station, had made a peace offer, but Baumann had rejected it. The official account of the Government, meanwhile, was that the people of Towe had been planning an uprising. The real reason for the military expedition requested by Baumann against the not yet subjugated population of the area around Towe was the conquest of northern Togo and the desire to secure the supply route from Lome to Misahöhe. For that purpose, villages on the way from Assahun (today Assahoun) to Palime (today Kpalimé) were exemplarily ‘punished’, i. e. shelled, looted, and burnt down, including the villages of Klonu, Djigbe, Assavhe, Wali and Towe. [...] In each village there were casualties and the survivors fled. After three rest days at Misahöhe, the ‘punitive expedition’ continued from 25 March 1895, this time in the Abesia area (now Agbessia, near Tovegan). [...] Baumann, who was collecting on behalf of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, used the opportunity offered by the ‘punitive expedition’ to loot.” (Künkler 2022: 30ff.)

The burning of Tové is said to have taken place on 19 March (Trierenberg 1914: 172ff.).¹⁵

14 The staff is recorded under inventory number MAf 02965, which has been marked as a war loss in the database. Diehl also noted in the exhibition catalogue for his “West African Exhibition” in Wiesbaden under A “Musical Instruments”: “N°30: Drum from Tove Uprising 1895 with staff of the warrior calling for participation” (MVL BA/1900/40: 67, Adolf Diehl).

15 In colonial sources, the village of Tové is also occasionally referred to as Tové-Djibe (cf. Klose 1899: 160-167).

The information obtained suggests that Adolf Diehl received the drums, which had probably been looted in Tové, from one of the colonial actors involved. Most likely, this was Ernst Baumann, who was also involved in the trade of objects with German museums. It was common among the colonial actors to exchange, give away, or sell objects. According to the catalogue card, Adolf Diehl sold the drums to the MVL in 1900.

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes

Since the drum, which was listed in the inventory under [MAf 02927](#), is said to have come from Tové¹⁶ in the *Plateaux* region, where Ewe live to this day, it may well have had a sacred function. In view of the customary rituals of the population groups in the area where the village of Tové is located today, it can be assumed that the previous owner of the drum probably belonged to the defending forces. Both drums were possibly used for declaring a state of war. Such rituals were traditional among the communities that make up the present-day countries of Togo, Ghana, and Bénin. [MAf 02928](#) is also a sacred drum that could only be used by an initiated person. Such drums are also found in royal palaces.

In his article “Tové 1895: une page gommée de l’histoire du Togo”, Oloukpona-Yinnon criticises the colonial discourse for speaking of an “uprising” and thus criminalising the legitimate resistance of Tové’s inhabitants. Instead, he advocates calling the campaign against Tové a colonial war (1995: 399-416).

Ohiniko Toffa

Sokpé stones

In the collection that Hans Gruner donated to the MVL, there are some so-called stones called *sokpé*. In 1901, Gruner’s donation included two such stones ([MAf 07016](#), [MAf 07017](#)) and in 1905 another 33 *sokpé* consisting of quartz ([MAf 11671](#), [MAf 11672](#), [MAf 11674](#), [MAf 11675](#), [MAf 11676 a-d](#), [MAf 11677 a-k](#), [MAf 11678 a-e](#), [MAf 11679 a-k](#)). Of these, three are no longer to be found. The stones show depressions in the middle on both sides and partly lighter, partly darker shades of colour. On some of them there are remnants of red or brown paint.

According to Ohiniko Toffa, the stones come from southern Togo and represent attributes of *Xɛbioso* (see chapter “Attributes of the god *Xɛbioso*”), who controls the harvest, the seasons, and the weather. The stones, according to Ohiniko Toffa, are believed to be a projectile used by the god to punish a thief by stoning him to death, for example. The colour of the stones indicates whether someone was killed with them or not: if it is dark, it means that the stone was used to kill; if it is light, the stone missed.

16 It is important to distinguish the village of Tové from a place of similar name, Mission Tové, in the Maritime Region.

On the catalogue card for [MAf 07016](#) there is a note stating that the Ewe “believed that it is hurled by lightning and is therefore found where lightning strikes. It is used to make rain, from travel bag [MAf 6986](#)”, as well as recording that the stone came from “Misahöhe”. Both lightning stones recorded with the entry year 1901 allegedly came from the travel bag of a Bimoba, although the catalogue cards cite the place of origin as “Misahöhe”, where the Ewe population lived. Whether the stones and *Xɛbioso* also had the same or similar significance among the Bimoba is not known. Perhaps the Bimoba came into possession of the stones in some other way, without being aware of their significance for the Ewe.

The region inhabited by the Bimoba was located north and west of Sansanné-Mango. At the end of his time as station director there, Hans Gruner undertook a war against the Bimoba from 6 to 30 May 1899 (Trierenberg 1914: 190). It is therefore possible that the appropriation of the “travel bag” in Gruner’s collection derives from this so-called punitive expedition.

However, it is also very likely that the stones, like those that came to the MVL through Gruner in 1905, all came from the surroundings of the “Misahöhe” station. Gruner was station director there from 1892 to 1896 and from 1899 to 1914, and he carried out numerous so-called expeditions into the surrounding area. In view of their probable place of origin, as well as their religious context, it is logical to attribute all *sokpé* to the Ewe.

However, in a letter to the Deutsches Museum in Munich dated 20 June 1914, Gruner also writes that he found many of the stones in an old settlement of the “Muawo” in “Misahöhe”. According to Gruner, the “Muawo” or “Mu people” had lived in the mountains around “Misahöhe” before the Ewe (Deutsches Museum, Munich, Archive, VA 1357/4). The Deutsches Museum in Munich also received some stones from Gruner.

Based on the location information recorded on the catalogue cards, it is highly likely that all the *sokpé* donated to the MVL in 1905 came from the vicinity of the “Misahöhe” station. In most cases, the notes on the cards also indicate that Hans Gruner found the stones: “from the cooking site of the middle soldiers” ([MAf 11674](#)), “from the bed of Agotò stream” ([MAf 11675](#)), “from Kussuntu, Near the house of the sawyer Daniel, unearthed beside the path” ([MAf 11676 a-d](#)), “found at the foot of the mountain near Heingba” ([MAf 11677 a-k](#)) and “found on the path between Azarié and Aviho” ([MAf 11678 a-e](#)). In this colonial context, which was characterised by extreme inequalities of power, the term “finding” is of course also to be regarded as a specific form of appropriation.

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes

Drums transferred to the MVL by Hans Gruner

The colonial official Hans Gruner donated four drums to the MVL in 1901 and another three in 1905. According to Ohiniko Toffa, drums are usually sacred objects or expressions of political status, and so they were all included in the provenance research conducted as part of the project. The drum catalogued under inventory number [MAf 06928](#) is an object of a deeply religious nature, which would have been used by an initiated person with a specific function, for example an information mediator who would beat the drum in the event of danger.

In the relevant file, it is described as “war drum of the Sultan of Matyakuale (Gurma), originating from Saberma” (MVL 1901/34: 3, Hans Gruner). The inhabitants of the former Gurma, the Gourmantché, now live partly in Burkina Faso, near the town of Dapaong in northern Togo, as well as in Bénin and Niger.

During the “German Togo Hinterland Expedition”, Gruner was in Matiakoali on 2 February 1895 and met a “Sultan of Matschakuale” named Tunenturiba Adama in Kankanchari on 5 February. The latter signed a so-called protection treaty with the Germans. The intention behind these treaties, disguised as friendship alliances, was the subjugation of the population to the German colonial power. According to Gruner, the ruler of Matiakoali asked him to establish “order in Gurma” and to protect “his country from the French” (Sebald 1997: 174). In his diary entry relating to this stay, Gruner twice mentions drums being played to summon the warriors for a feast and to welcome him (*ibid.*: 157-175). It is possible that Gruner received or procured the drum in this context.

However, the drum may also have come from a war context. Between May and October 1897, Gaston Thierry temporarily established a German station at Pama, a town in the Gurma region of present-day Burkina Faso. From there he conducted war campaigns against the nearby villages of Diabiga and Matiakoali, during which he may have appropriated the drum and later handed it over to Gruner. Since the border negotiations between the French, German, and British colonial powers in July 1897 resulted in the French legal claims to the Gourma area [Gurma] being recognised (Trierenberg 1914: 146), Gruner probably never met the ruler Tunenturiba Adama again.

The file entry indicates that the drum originally came from “Saberma”. Saberma is a region and population in what is now the Emirate of Gwandu in Nigeria. According to his diary, Valentin von Massow hired “Saberma riders” as soldiers. Regarding their origin, he writes that he had heard of a Saberma community on the Niger near Say (Sebald 2014: 285). Later he mentions that they came from the “Hausa states” on the other side of the Niger, from where they had been exiled, and that they were now settling in Kabou, Togo, among other places (*ibid.*: 440, 537). Von Massow further mentions that the Saberma are Muslim (*ibid.*: 452). No specific connections between the “Saberma” and Matiakoali or Gourma have yet been established.

The drums listed under the numbers [MAf 06947](#) and [MAf 06948](#) also came to the MVL via Gruner in 1901. According to the catalogue card, [MAf 06947](#) is “one of the two talking

drums of the Sultan of Sansanne Mangu. The drums are placed side by side on forked sticks and beaten using 2 sticks (MAf 6949 a, b) by someone who knows the language of drums." [MAf 06948](#) was "the other of the two talking drums of the Sultan of Sansanne Mangu". So far, there is no clear indication of who the "sultan" was.

Sansanné-Mango was the capital of the Tchokossi monarchy that dominated northern Togo. The colonial rulers usually referred to the population there in a generalised way as "Mangu". According to Ohiniko Toffa, drums play an important cultural role among the Tchokossi, as among all populations in Togo. These "talking drums" belonged to a ceremonially initiated person and were used to convey information from the ruler to the population. According to Emery Patrick Effiboley, in pre-colonial times, drumming was a means of communicating information and there were people who had the ability to decode and then disseminate the messages. Nowadays, this knowledge is disappearing.

Gruner was in the Tchokossi kingdom for the first time in early 1895. He arrived in the town of Sansanné-Mango on 10 January, where he sought to persuade the incumbent ruler, Biema Asabiè [Nbema Sabie], to sign a so-called protection treaty (Aguigah/LeGall/Wagne 2023, Sebald 1997: 114). During Gruner's negotiations with the "Sultan of Mangu", the two men exchanged numerous gifts (Sebald 1997: 114-127). However, there is no information on what these gifts were. In his diary, Gruner mentions drumming only once during his stay in Sansanné-Mango: "The market was very lively, since it was the time of the festival that takes place every four months. A lot of people performed dances of a special kind to the constant sound of drums and singing." (ibid.: 127) Gruner passed through Sansanné-Mango again during the return journey of the DTE in May 1895 (ibid.: 361).

Later, Gruner was director of the German station at Sansanné-Mango for three years (1896–1899) and from there led numerous campaigns against the population of the surrounding region (Trierenberg 1914: 24-29, 112-138). There is no evidence that Gruner met the Sansanné-Mango ruler again or explicitly went to war against the Tchokossi. Nevertheless, it is also possible that Gruner appropriated the drum during his time as station director at Sansanné-Mango.

In December 1896, Gaston Thierry took over management of the station. In early November 1897, Thierry had the local Tchokossi ruler Biema Asabiè murdered, allegedly because he insisted on adhering to treaties made with the British and French colonial powers (Lang/Nicklisch 2021: 159). Thierry had the ensuing resistance of the population put down militarily. It is likely that he used this opportunity to plunder the royal property (Aguigah/LeGall/Wagne 2023). He then arranged for the "election" of a new "king of Mango" who would be loyal to him. Some of the royal property is held in the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin. Whether the drums sent to Leipzig by Hans Gruner were also part of this property, and whether he received them from Thierry, is a question that remains open and requires further research.

According to Ohiniko Toffa, the drum, which is catalogued under [MAf 06972](#), is not only a musical instrument, but also a ritual object that is played at various ceremonies of a moral and political nature. According to the catalogue card, the drum comes from the "Moba",

who call themselves Bimoba. The Bimoba territory was located north and west of Sansanné-Mango.

In November 1897, when Gruner was station director there, he ordered First Lieutenant Gaston Thierry to secure the route from Sansanné-Mango to “Mossi”, an area around Ouagadougou in present-day Burkina Faso, against the alleged raids of the Bimoba. Thierry’s troops burned down three villages and attempted to subdue the Bimoba through warlike conflicts. In February 1898, Thierry again went to war against the Bimoba and attacked the people in the Dapaong countryside. During these colonial wars, Thierry may have stolen property from the Bimoba and given it to Hans Gruner. The giving of war booty as gifts was common practice among colonial actors.

However, Hans Gruner himself also went to war against the Bimoba on 6 May 1899. He also marched as far north as the villages of Dapaong and Kantindi with the aim of forcefully subduing the population. On 30 May, Gruner returned to Sansanné-Mango (Trierenberg 1914: 188ff.). It is therefore likely that the drum in Gruner’s collection derives from this so-called punitive expedition.

The owner of the three drums donated to the MVL by Hans Gruner in 1905 was presumably an Ewe authority of the “We landscape”. This landscape is said to be located near the town of Keta and the Keta Lagoon on the coast of present-day Ghana (Spieth 1906: 13, 33). Gruner gave the museum not only the three drums belonging to this authority, but also a “sceptre” ([MAf 11659](#)) and an “ancestral chair” ([MAf 11655](#)), which are noted as being from the ruler of the “We landscape”. All these objects may be regarded as insignia of an Ewe authority (cf. Spieth 1906: 33, 149, 100).

According to the catalogue card, the drum with drumstick, which is recorded under inventory number [MAf 11660 a, b](#), is the “war drum” or “execution drum of the ruler of the We”. The drum was called *sabatram*. The catalogue card goes on to state that the drum was supposedly beaten when someone was accused of a crime or executed as a sacrifice to a deceased ruler. Two other drums ([MAf 11661 a-c](#) and [MAf 11662 a, b](#)) are, according to their respective catalogue cards, the “talking drums” of the authority of the We landscape: “The talking drums are the same throughout Togo, up to and including Jendi, Mangu and Salaga; the drum language is probably not as rich as in Cameroon, but it is rich enough. [MAf 11661 a-c](#) and [MAf 11662 a, b](#) were beaten simultaneously, each with one drumstick; the number and sequence of the sets of drum beats on the two drums seem to distinguish the words; the two drums are different in tone, they are positioned at an angle on fork-like sticks.”

The drums are known as *atopani* in southern Togo. Furthermore, Ohiniko Toffa says they are both religious and political objects that only high-ranking and initiated persons are allowed to use, for example servants of the ruling authority. When the drum is played, a message is conveyed that only other initiated persons can understand. People then gather at a certain place, for example to perform a ceremony. Often the messages conveyed contain secret information that non-initiated persons cannot understand.

Based on their possible geographical origin and their character, the drums most likely derive from the Ewe. Hans Gruner married an Ewe woman named Woegblo Nutsua on a date unknown to us (Adili 2012). Through this relationship, he may have had easier access to sensitive objects. At the beginning of the DTE in November 1894, Gruner passed through areas where the Ewe live(d) when travelling from Lomé towards the north (Sebald 1997: 43-61). However, he may also have acquired the so-called status objects during his time as station director at “Misahöhe” from 1892 to 1896 and from 1899 to 1914, as from there he led numerous so-called expeditions into the surrounding countryside as well as campaigns against the population (ibid.: 8, Trierenberg 1914: 174ff.).

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes

Attributes of the deity *Fofie*

In 1906, Adam Mischlich, a former missionary and colonial official at the time, donated 91 objects ([MAf 11847](#)–MAf 11937) to the MVL, all from the *Fofie* religious community and representing objects of the deity *Fofie*. Seven of these objects are marked in the database as war losses. Originally, the community, along with their religious objects, had come from Kumasi in present-day Ghana, then the capital of the Asante/Ashanti [Aschanti]. The religious community allegedly had moved, taking the objects with them, to “Kepatasso (Gebatáso, Tariassó), north of Kete Krachi” in the early nineteenth century (Antze 1907: 36). Adam Mischlich, who became station director at Kete Krachi in 1898, is said to have appropriated the attributes of *Fofie* in Kete Krachi while they were being transported back to Kumasi.

Regarding the *Fofie* objects, Adam Mischlich wrote in a letter to the MVL dated 25 January 1905:

“The most valuable piece is probably a complete fetish outfit. I am sure that items of such richness & completeness cannot be seen in any museum. Nothing is missing: the fetish with all accessories, his children, the iron tripods [...], the amulets, several pieces of clothing & headgear, medicines, [...] bangles etc. worn by the priest, all in such a state of completeness as I have never seen in my 14 years in Africa. There are about 4 loads of this equipment, which is, by the way, also very well preserved; it will be very suitable for showing in an exhibition of a fetish priest along with his fetishes etc. in your museum. [...] It was a great coincidence that I was able to acquire these important ethnographic objects. A famous fetish was brought to Togo years ago by the Asante; everyone flocked to see it, etc. The fetish remained in Togo for a long time, then the famous priest died & the fetish was to be transferred back to its former home in Asante. I came across the caravan by chance and of course tried to purchase everything. Only there did I see that everything is part of one complete fetish. It is big, and it is also a very big rarity to witness such a procession. That the Asante were not happy to sell their fetish goes without saying.” (MVL 1906/41: 103f., Adam Mischlich)

These statements by Mischlich clearly show that he was aware of the religious significance of these objects for the people and that he procured them precisely for this reason. He even suggests displaying them in the museum together with a religious authority of the community. By procuring the objects described, Mischlich followed the contemporary paradigm that “collecting artefacts” of colonised societies in decline was important in order to preserve their material culture “in its originality” (cf. Penny 2002, Zimmerman 2001).

According to Mischlich, the *Fofie* religion and the attributes of its deities potentially belong to the Asante people living in present-day Ghana. However, in the case of [MAf 11891](#), described as a “*Fofie* priest’s chair”, it has been suggested that it may actually be an Ewe object. An analysis of the *Fofie* beliefs of the Anlo Ewe written by Meera Venkatachalam would seem to confirm this conjecture:

“Fofie in contemporary Anlo – evolved into a set of religious practices through which Anlo renegotiated the relationship between themselves, and their slave ancestors. Rituals associated with the worship of Fofie revived and continue to revive the memory of slavery in Anlo. Historians have described how, as early as the nineteenth century, some Anlo possessed the means to address the consequences of slavery; a cult also called Fofie was dedicated to slaves who died in the chiefdom.” (Venkatachalam 2012: 18)

So far, however, it has not been possible to definitively assign the objects to a specific population group. Asante and Ewe both lived in the region around Kete Krachi. The names of the objects related to *Fofie* are also words used in the Akan language. The Asante belong to the Akan linguistic and cultural group. Likewise, translations of some words can be found in Euegbe, the language of the Ewe.

Antze cites Mischlich in his contribution to the 1907 Yearbook of the Städtisches Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, writing:

“The original home of the fetish was Djaki near Kumase on the Gold Coast. About a hundred years ago, for some unknown reason, it had been taken from there to Kapatasso (Gebatáссо, Tariassó), north of Kete Krachi. The [p]riest who transferred the Fofie to Kapatasso was called Asare. After his death, the woman Akuya was given the priesthood, since a priest and a priestess were always appointed alternately. Her successor Nyankunkra died in 1905 and Akousa, the sixty-year-old daughter of Akuya, was to become a priestess, but rejected the office. It was then decided to take the fetish back to its home in Djaki. [...] As it was passing through Kete Krachi, Mischlich managed to buy the fetish. It should be noted in this account of Mischlich [...] that the person chosen as priest can refuse to accept the office, and in the present case this refusal was the reason for the decision to return the fetish to its original home.” (Antze 1907: 36f.)

In Mischlich’s original letter to the MVL dated 18 November 1906, however, Mischlich writes: “here it was possible to acquire the fetish, employing much effort & patience and... cunning”. (MVL 1906/41: 64, Adam Mischlich) The dots “...” are also present in that form

in the original letter. As early as 1907, the author Dr. Gustav Antze attempted to legitimise the appropriation context in retrospect by using the term “buy”.

According to Ohiniko Toffa, the *Fofie* objects were to have been taken to their place of origin at that time because the deity *Fofie* had not found a successor to serve him. If this happened, explains Ohiniko Toffa, the ritual objects of the deity had to be buried at the place of origin where he had manifested himself, thereby setting him free, in order to prevent negative after-effects. For Mischlich, his Christian missionary context invariably also played a role. It was standard for the local population to have to hand over religious, non-Christian objects. The general colonial power relations should also be taken into account in every case of “acquisition”, so that we must always question the legitimacy of a “purchase” in the colonial context.

Based on Mischlich’s statement below, it can be seen that he believed he could only achieve the subjugation of the local population by removing objects that were important to the faith community:

“The main fetish, the so-called Golden Chair, of the Asante people is still in the hands of the natives despite great efforts by the British to obtain it. Until they get hold of it, the British will always have difficulties governing in Asante, constantly encountering resistance.” (ibid.: 86)

Antze also describes the purported composition of the objects:

“Our fetish consists of eight persons, the elder Fofie, the younger Fofie, their common wife Nsuoya and five sons. Of these, three are the sons of the elder Fofie and Nsuoya: Kobinko, Pa, Tano. The other two are the sons of the younger Fofie and Nsuoya: Kobinko and Nyembo.” (Antze 1907: 37f.)

The aforementioned museum yearbook shows exactly which objects are assigned to which *Fofie*. The titles of the objects, the catalogue cards, and the relevant archival documents also provide further information. Mischlich further describes how the objects were supposedly positioned and used ceremonially (MVL 1906/41: 64ff., Adam Mischlich). Mischlich was also keenly aware of the significance of the removal of the objects, stating:

“Only about ten years ago, a war would have broken out over [...] the fetish Fofie. It would have been completely impossible to acquire one of these fetishes, or even to set eyes on it. Even now, all caution must be exercised. These fetishes look so inconspicuous and crude, seeming to have almost no value at all, but they are of very great value to the natives, irreplaceable to them, if only because of their great age. They hold the [people] together, the people rally around them, they are the common bond that embraces everyone. With the departure of the fetish, the people lose a great source of strength. The fetish cannot be replaced.” (Antze 1907: 55, quoted from MVL 1906/41: 86, Adam Mischlich)



Drawing 1 of the so-called older *Fofie* (among others [MAf 11847](#)), 2 of a leather bag of the Hausa ([MAf 00740](#)) and 3 of a here so-called “hunting enchantment” (“Jagdzauber”) (MAf 03515) in a cigarette card album entitled “German colonies” of the Cigaretten-Bilderdienst Dresden (1936: 57, Figure 185, No.1).

The objects of the *Fofie* were not only described in detail by Mischlich in his letters of 1906 and by Antze in his contribution to the museum yearbook of 1907; the older *Fofie* ([MAf 11847](#), [MAf 11848](#), [MAf 11849](#), [MAf 11857](#), [MAf 11858](#), [MAf 11859](#)) also found its way, in the form of a drawing, into a cigarette card album entitled “Deutsche Kolonien” (German Colonies) in 1936. The card also includes a brief description of its supposed meaning and origin (Cigaretten-Bilderdienst Dresden 1936: 57, Figure 185, No.1). The fact that the image of a *Fofie* appeared in such a picture album also points to the fact that the “objects” were broadly circulated and illustrates the colonial form of representation in popular culture.¹⁷

According to Michael Gyimah, guest curator at the MVL in August 2022, there are several reasons why it is highly likely that the *Fofie* objects originated from the Asante. This is suggested, among other things, by the Akan names of the eight persons who make up the *Fofie*, as well as the fact that it originated from Kumasi, the former Asante capital.

¹⁷ This is where the important debates on the relationship between colonialism, museums, and popular culture become relevant, cf. for example Langbehn 2010 and Grewe 2006.

In the case of the set of *Fofie* objects, we were thus able to reconstruct the possible regional origin, the sensitive significance, as well as the appropriation context and intentions to a large extent. Nevertheless, further research is necessary, especially in cooperation with partners from present-day Ghana, in order to further clarify the provenance of the attributes of the *Fofie*.

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes

“Odom” attributes

In 1904 Adam Mischlich donated eight objects ([MAf 09595](#), [MAf 09596](#), [MAf 09597](#), [MAf 09598](#), [MAf 09599](#), [MAf 09600](#), [MAf 09601](#), [MAf 09606](#)) to the MVL, which, according to his own statement, are supposed to be connected with a tree known as an “Odom (odum) tree” and its religious use (MVL 1904/46: 19ff., Adam Mischlich). The objects consist of three bags and five sticks. According to the catalogue cards, they all supposedly come from the “Adjuti landscape” [Atwuti, Atjuti] in present-day Ghana. The “Adjuti landscape” does not appear on modern maps, but is mentioned twice in Valentin von Massow’s diary (Sebald 2014: 422, 624). According to von Massow, the landscape refers to a mountain range west of the towns of Tutukpene and Katchebi [Kechebi] in Ghana. In a letter to the MVL dated 10 April 1904, Mischlich conveyed his understanding of “Odom practice”:

“1 Odom stick from Atwuti, Togo. 1 Odom bag from Atwuti, Togo. Odom drinking bowl, medicine + Odom cords.

In Liane, capital of Atwuti in the hinterland of Togo, the great fetish Buruku, father of the famous Dente fetish of Krachi, has his seat. Odom poison is prepared from the root bark of the odom tree. The main fetish priest is priest Buruku, but other priests can also administer odom once they are equipped with an odom bag & odom stick. The priest hangs the bag with the fetish utensils, especially the drinking bowl, poison, and cords over his shoulder, takes his fetish stick in his hand & wanders around the country, including in the neighbouring regions. The natives now consult these priests. If, for example, someone dies unexpectedly in a place, someone may be blamed for the death. That person is said to have bewitched the dead person. If the man does not wish to accept the blame, he must drink ‘odom’ to prove that he is not guilty. The priest hands him the drinking bowl and the man must drink the poison. If he vomits it out, he is innocent, and the priest hangs a fetish cord around his neck as a sign of his innocence. If the man dies as a result of drinking the poison, it is a sign of his guilt. [...] The priest, of course, has the power to decide whether the native in question should live or not. In the latter case they do indeed administer the odom poison, while in the former case they substitute it with a harmless medicine. [...] Either way, the foolish people believe in the power of the fetish. In 1898, odom was banned because people were dying as a result of drinking odom. But still, in secret, some priests, including the capital priests of Buruku, continued to administer odom.

At the end of 1903, they were taken to the station and punished – giving odom is officially banned.

List No. 5

4 Odom sticks from Atjuti (Atwuti)

2 Odom bags from Atjuti (Atwuti)" (MVL 1904/46: 19ff., Adam Mischlich).

According to Mischlich, "Odom" (odum) is the name of a tree from whose roots a poison can be produced, and the "odom ordeal" is a ritual of the Buruku faith community in "Adjuti". The Dente community, which was located in the vicinity of Kete Krachi, is also said to belong to this community. The tradition of the "giving of odom" (or "odom ordeal") is also cited in colonial records relating to objects associated with the faith community of the deity *Nayo*:

"The ~~fetish~~ Nayo in Perea near Bismarckburg, the natural shrine of the Adele, was the reason why, despite its prohibition by the Kete-Krachi station, 'odom' was given again and again, but only very secretly. The giving of 'odom' had their support, their backing in Nayo, and, although someone was always being punished, people believed Nayo would protect them." (MVL 1906/41: 87, Adam Mischlich)

Ohiniko Toffa says that it is difficult to establish the historical facts concerning the ritual described by Mischlich beyond the colonial sources and to determine exactly what "odom" can be traced back to. According to Jean-Claude Barbier, a population group with the name *Odomi* exists in "Adjuti". Based on our current knowledge, there does not seem to have been a priest by the name of *Buruku*, but there was a deity called *Burunku* who protected a village called Siare in the "Adjuti landscape". *Burunku* is said to be a founding deity of the "Adjuti country" on the present-day border between Togo and Ghana (Barbier 1995: 151-164). The importance of spiritual practice is, according to Ohiniko Toffa, much more important than what is here described in a truncated and false way by Mischlich. The appropriation context exhibits paternalism, which is evident in Mischlich's disparagement of the "Adjuti" population group as "foolish people" (MVL 1904/46: 20, Adam Mischlich).

Mischlich was well aware of the importance of the objects and, consequently, the significance of their removal. In a letter to the MVL, he writes that "all caution must be exercised" in the "acquisition" of the sensitive objects, since they are "of very great value to the natives" and "irreplaceable for them" (MVL 1906/41: 86, Adam Mischlich). In the same letter Mischlich makes it clear that the resistance of the local population in the colonies can only be broken by taking away their religious artefacts (ibid.: 86).

If we assume that a religious authority owned a bag and a stick, and that the objects obtained by Mischlich are three bags and five sticks, it can be concluded that there were up to between five and nine former owners to whom these attributes belonged. In view of their perceived religious significance, it seems unlikely that the owners would have given them up voluntarily. Mischlich possibly used the statement that the colonial administration

made the alleged “giving of odom” a punishable offence as an official means of gaining possession of these objects and handing them over to German museums. In any case, the origin of these objects lies in the present-day area east of Tutukpene and Kechebi, on the border between Togo and Ghana.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes

The Campaign against the Dagomba

In the cases of 31 objects in total from the groups of objects procured by Valentin von Massow, Hans Gruner, and Adolf Diehl, it has been possible to establish a direct connection to a German campaign waged in late 1896 against the Dagbon Kingdom in the north-east of present-day Ghana. This campaign has recently been the subject of several publications (cf. LeGall/Aguigah 2023, Künkler 2022: 33-39, Lang/Nicklisch 2021: 138f.). It was the first in a series of campaigns of conquest in the late 1890s aimed at achieving the military subjugation of the local population by deploying the police force (see chapter “The Historical Context”). Those involved were the commander of the police force, Valentin von Massow, as well as Hans Gruner, Gaston Thierry, and Police Master Heitmann (Künkler 2022: 33). Only from the latter are there no collections in the MVL. Their goal was to reach the military station at Sansanné-Mango promptly and secure it in order to consolidate the German claim to power.¹⁸

The route leading to the station was to be prepared for German colonial conquest, and the resistance of the Kingdom of Dagbon, which was located in that region, was to be broken. The campaign started at Kete Krachi station on 23 November 1896, involving a total of 372 people, including 91 soldiers and 46 porters armed with breechloaders (Sebald 2014: 165). On their way through the territory of the Dagomba and their allies, the Nanumba and Bikpakpaam, the German colonisers unleashed violence by burning down almost every single village (ibid.: 164-207). Near the village of Adibo, they encountered an army of thousands of Dagomba warriors who resisted them. Hundreds died as a result of the technically superior breech-loading weapons used by the colonisers, who then looted the battlefield (Tamakloe 1932: 43, Trierenberg 1914: 131). On the same day, the German troops also stormed the Dagbon capital of Yendi, large parts of which von Massow’s troops razed to the ground. In the memorial culture of the Dagomba, this war and its devastating effects for the kingdom are still commemorated to this day (Hardi 2016, Sulemana 2013, Pukariga 2005). The Dagomba recall the Battle of Adibo as Adibo dali (ibid.).

At the MVL, two of the objects donated by von Massow can be traced back to Adibo dali: a headdress and a so-called war garment. They were part of an assemblage of objects sold to the museum in 1899 by Marianne von Kuylenstjerna, the mother of von Massow, shortly after the latter’s death (see chapter on Valentin von Massow). The headdress ([MAf 00853](#)) is referred to by von Kuylenstjerna in one of her letters as “the beautiful

¹⁸ The plan to subjugate the Dagomba was one of the elements of colonial policy to be found under the archival signature BArch R175-14 I_4 at the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.



The village of Adibo, 24 November 2022. Photo: Jan König

chief's headdress" (MVL 1899/38: 3, Valentin von Massow). It received special attention in the context of the project; I selected it as the subject of research for my Master's thesis. Julia Pfau and the researchers working on the project "The Restitution of Knowledge", Yann LeGall and Elias Aguigah, were able to link the headgear to a list of war booty in von Massow's diary, which has recently drawn considerable attention (cf. Künkler 2022, Lang/Nicklisch 2021). A few days after the battle against the Dagomba, von Massow noted:

"[...] But nevertheless I have a few quite interesting things, of which I value most highly the Yendi flag or ensign, the seat cushions¹⁹ of the King of Yendi, the suitcase of the King of Adibo, and a cap which is said to have belonged to the Serkin Bindiga duká kasan Dagomba" (Sebald 2014: 213).

The attribution of the headgear to a high-ranking Dagomba person and the reference in the diary to the "Serkin Bindiga duká kasan Dagomba" led LeGall and Aguigah to conclude that the individual in question may have been the Dagomba army commander, Kanbon nakpema Ziblim Wuhu (Aguigah/LeGall et al. 2023).

19 Oussounou Abdel-Aziz Sandja identified a Dagomba seat cushion in the collections of the Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen (REM-Archiv Weltkulturen, IV Af 7372 (Karlsruhe inventory number: A. 7123 Lederkissen des verst. King Mohammed Andani, Br.89, Dagomba)), which came from Berlin (I/MV 725, E 1276/1901: 90ff.), to Karlsruhe and finally to Mannheim in 1935 through the so-called Karlsruhe Ringtausch. Whether this is the seat cushion that von Massow speaks of has not yet been conclusively clarified.

That hypothesis was substantiated during a research trip that I conducted together with Michael Gyimah and Jan König in November 2022. During a one-week stay in Yendi, the political centre of the Dagbon Kingdom, we were able to further investigate the provenance of the headdress as well as of four other objects among those selected for the project.

Alhaji Sulemana Alhassan Iddi, Chair of the Yendi Heritage and Research Center (YHRC) and Mohammed Alimanche, representative of the Royal District in Yendi Municipal Assembly, accompanied us as a research group. This brought us into contact with various representatives of the Dagomba from the Royal District. Photographs of a total of 15 objects classified as “Dagomba” in the museum database inspired a lively discussion on German colonial history in Dagbon. It became clear that the campaign of 1896 still plays a central role in the cultural memory of the people, and that some of the said objects are directly connected to that event. All the people we interviewed recognised the objects and were able to cite their local designation and function. All the people from the different age groups expressed an explicit wish for the objects to be returned and for the historical objects, whose detailed craftsmanship aroused much excitement, to be made accessible to the community.

The headdress is a *Gboyno Zipligu* (‘bulletproof headgear’ in Dagbani), as Alhassan Sulemana described it in an interview (Interview with Alhassan Sulemana, 26.11.22, Yendi). The *Gboyno Zipligu* is worn by the Dagomba in the context of war and on important political occasions, and it is considered inalienable. The large number of talismans on this specimen suggests the high-ranking position of its previous owner.

In the course of the journey, we were able to identify four more objects as war booty from Adibo dali. The second object, which is part of the assemblage given to the museum by Kuylentsjerna, is a so-called “war garment” ([MAf 00854](#)), a *Gboyno* (‘bulletproof gown’). Like the *Gboyno Zipligu*, it is equipped with talismans and would have been worn in a war context (ibid.). A second *Gboyno* ([MAf 06921](#)) was donated to the museum by Hans Gruner in 1901. In addition, we were able to assign two further objects to Adibo dali, which came to the museum in 1900 via Adolf Diehl and were incorrectly classified as Hausa in the database. These two objects, described as “ritual staffs”, are also war-related objects that were employed as status symbols and could also be used in the context of war ([MAf 03357 Kabre](#) and [MAf 03358 Dangbe](#)) (ibid.).

We were able to confirm the provenances of these five objects described here in interviews with various representatives of the Dagomba. The interviewees confirmed their function as inalienable objects that were carried on the battlefield. Their origin as war booty is also probable because they were in the possession of two colonial military officers involved in the campaign against the Dagomba.

We were able to identify 26 other objects as spoils of war from the campaign against the Dagomba and selected them for closer investigation. Adolf Diehl sold them to the museum in 1900. He noted: “Department D: Weapons of other tribes. Weapons 39-94, 241-250, 251 and 252 come from the Dagomba campaign and are mostly spoils of war” (MVL BA/1900/40: 73, Adolf Diehl). These are six so-called “signal whistles” ([MAf 02956](#),

[MAf 02957](#), [MAf 02958](#), [MAf 02959](#), [MAf 02960](#), [MAf 02961](#)), 18 objects designated as weapons or tools ([MAf 03120](#), [MAf 03121](#), [MAf 03122](#), [MAf 03123](#), [MAf 03125](#), [MAf 03126](#), [MAf 03127](#), [MAf 03128](#), [MAf 03130](#), [MAf 03131](#), [MAf 03132](#), [MAf 03151](#), [MAf 03152](#), [MAf 03153](#), [MAf 03154](#), [MAf 03155](#), [MAf 03157](#), [MAf 03158](#)), and one metal bangle ([MAf 03108](#)). Some were noted on the catalogue cards as having been “acquired during the Dagomba campaign (03.1896–12.1896)”. The reference to looting during the campaign is therefore obvious. Another bow ([MAf 26847](#)), which we were able to assign to the Dagomba but for which further evidence is lacking, was not purchased by the museum from Diehl until 1919.

Ohiniko Toffa has investigated the connection between Diehl’s collection and the war against the Dagomba conducted by First Lieutenant Valentin von Massow, Hans Gruner, and Gaston Thierry in 1896 and 1897, as well as the “subjugation” of the Dagomba in 1900 through a campaign led by Rigler (Trierenberg 1914: 112, 162). It is known that Diehl was in contact with von Massow, who described him as a “passionate collector” (cf. Sebald 2014: 94, 98, 100, 105, 122, 356, 376, 384). Documents in the state archives in Lomé prove that auctions of von Massow’s estate took place in the colony in 1899 and 1900, at which Diehl acquired objects (Fonds Allemands, ANT, FA 1, N°416: 133, 226, see chapter on Adolf Diehl).

Ricarda Rivoir

The Campaign against the Kabiye

As part of the project, we investigated 38 objects which, according to the database, are attributed to the Kabiye. We were able to link their provenances, with a high degree of probability, to a coordinated campaign by German colonial actors at the end of January 1898 (21 January 1898–1 February 1898). This was carried out jointly by the three station chiefs Valentin von Massow (Bassar), Gaston Thierry (Sansanné-Mango), and Hermann Kersting (Sokodé). Von Massow moved in from the southwest, Kersting from the south, and Thierry from the north (Sebald 2014: 521, 1988: 199, Trierenberg 1914: 155-160). This was accompanied by the so-called opening up of the “Transkara territory” (today mainly in the Kara Region). The colonial sources record the “great obduracy” with which the population in the north-east of the colony resisted (Trierenberg 1914: 160). By the end of the campaign, almost all groups had been subdued. The use of a machine gun by the colonisers was a significant factor in this (Sebald 1988: 199). In his diary, Valentin von Massow described the burning down of numerous villages. Both in the official report and in his personal diary, he mentioned the spoils of war he made in the process:

“The spoils of war in the form of weapons and curiosities were very plentiful, and the insolent riffraff were punished” and elsewhere “rich spoils in fetish stuff, weapons, grain, chickens, sheep etc. were taken, so that the Büfale people have also incurred severe material losses” (Sebald 2014: 541).²⁰

20 Von Massow’s “Niedermetzelung der Kabure [sic]” (Massacre of the Kabure [sic]) has already been investigated by Angelika Tunis (1996: 552-561).

The objects that we investigated more closely in the course of the project derive from the collections assembled by the colonial actors Valentin von Massow, Adolf Diehl, and Gaston Thierry. They consist mainly of items of clothing and weapons.

We were able to identify the majority of the objects as war booty taken by Valentin von Massow. Among them are 22 objects that the MVL purchased in 1899 from von Massow's mother, Marianne von Kuylentjerna ([MAf 00727](#), [MAf 00763 a-d](#), [MAf 00812 a-f](#), [MAf 00856](#), [MAf 00857](#), [MAf 00858](#), [MAf 00859](#), [MAf 00860](#), [MAf 00861](#), [MAf 00862](#), [MAf 00863](#), [MAf 00864](#), [MAf 00865](#), [MAf 00866](#), [MAf 00867](#), [MAf 00868](#), [MAf 00869](#), [MAf 00870](#), [MAf 00871](#), [MAf 00872](#), [MAf 00873](#), [MAf 00874](#)). In addition, we selected three objects ([MAf 01005](#), [MAf 01006](#), [MAf 01009 a-w](#)) from an assemblage that she donated to the MVL in 1900 (see chapter on Valentin von Massow). She did so on the advice of Felix von Luschan, who then coordinated the distribution of the large assortment of poisoned arrows and bows donated by Kuylentjerna among various German museums. Those he listed included the following: Cologne, Kiel, Hanover, Hildesheim, Frankfurt am Main, Prussia, Munich, Stuttgart, Dresden, Leipzig, Karlsruhe, Freiburg, Darmstadt, Jena, Oldenburg, Brunswick, Altenburg, Detmold, Lübeck, Bremen, Hamburg (I/MV 722, E 1231/00: 137). In the letter that von Luschan sent to Weule on this subject, he wrote:

"I am not in a position to give any more precise indication of their origin, but there is no doubt that the objects derive either from the Kabure [sic] and Bassari themselves, or from their immediate neighbours. In any case, the bows and arrows are of a kind that has probably never been represented in any European collection" (MVL 1900/4: 3f., Valentin von Massow).

Ricarda Rivoir

Another ten objects are a selection from among a total of 38 items that are war booty collected by von Massow, which the MVL bought from Adolf Diehl in 1900 ([MAf 03110](#), [MAf 03111](#), [MAf 03112](#), [MAf 03113](#), [MAf 03114](#), [MAf 03115](#), [MAf 03116](#), [MAf 03117](#), [MAf 03118](#), [MAf 03119](#)). According to the accompanying catalogue cards, Diehl bought these objects, which are pieces of war-related equipment, from a servant of von Massow, who had looted them during the campaign. Regarding this Department C, Diehl noted: "This whole department comes from the Kabrè campaign [sic] of Baron von Massow, which I acquired via my clerk" (MVL BA/1900/40: 73, Adolf Diehl). Regarding [MAf 03119](#) ("war helmet"), he states that it is a gift from Valentin von Massow. An archival document from the Archives Nationales du Togo, Fonds Allemands, confirms that auctions of parts of Valentin von Massow's estate took place twice in Lomé. The first auction took place on 14 December 1899. Those present at the auction are listed as C. Böcking on behalf of Bödecker and Meyer, Lachner, Doherr, J. Seyfert, A. Diehl, and Dr. Wendland (ZMO, Nachlass Peter Sebald, copy from the Archives Nationales du Togo, Fonds Allemands, ANT, FA 1, N°416: 133). The second auction took place on 11 August 1900 (ibid.: 226). It is thus confirmed that Diehl's collection includes some items from von Massow's estate.

The items selected for the project also include a drum that the MVL purchased from Adolf Diehl in 1919 ([MAf 26844 a, b](#)). In addition, two headdresses were selected that the museum purchased from Thierry in 1900 ([MAf 01286](#) and [MAf 01287](#)). The archival records examined at the MVL do not provide any information on these specific objects, but it is known that Thierry made financial profit from war booty. Moreover, their cultural significance suggests that they were appropriated in the context of war.

The objects under investigation originate from the present-day Kara Region. It has been possible to link the bows and arrows at the MVL to von Massow's diary entries about the campaign against the Kabiye, in which he described similar objects. In his diary, von Massow described a battle he fought in Sirka (north-east of Kara). The objects mentioned there are to be regarded as hunting and defensive equipment used by the Kabiye. The cultural significance of these objects can be inferred from the following accounts by von Massow on German colonial history (Sebald 2014: 546). Furthermore, Valentin von Massow gives a detailed description of the people fighting:

"The men look like real savages, as one imagines black cannibals to be. They wear a kind of helmet on their heads, made of a calabash decorated with cowries, and in many cases they have a round, shiny piece of iron about the size of a thaler tied in front of their foreheads, which gives them the appearance of a cyclops from a distance. The nostrils are pierced and penetrated with leopard claws. Around their necks they wear blue beads and around their arms bangles made of iron. A piece of leather, densely covered with feathers, is tied around their ankles. Otherwise, they are completely unclothed, indeed, the chief, to whom I wanted to give a piece of cloth, even refused, saying that they abhor all cloth. Their weapons are bows, and quivers with poisoned arrows; the long crooked Kabure knife, and often a club or battle axe. In addition, they carry their war flute tied to the quiver. Almost all Kabure people [sic] have this kind of adornment and weaponry, and the differences between the individual regions are only minor" (ibid.: 538).

Among the holdings of the MVL are some of the helmets that von Massow described so disparagingly in his diary. They are to be treated as sensitive objects. Their sensitivity is defined by the circumstances of their appropriation and the way they came into the museum (see chapter "The Methodological Approach"). Even today, every July, public ceremonies take place in Kara in which these objects are used. They are high-value ritual objects whose cultural significance is to be understood in the context of Kondo initiation ceremonies.

The collection also includes a so-called war outfit that was sold to the MVL via Diehl. The following reference was found in the in-house archives: "from N°1 to 10, complete clothing of a warrior killed in the Kabre campaign [sic]" (MVL BA/1900/40: 19, Adolf Diehl). These are culturally sensitive objects associated with the initiation ceremonies described above. Their owner was a Kabiye killed in the war.

The objects purchased from von Massow's collection in 1899 also include a group of so-called "signal whistles" that were not assigned to any population group. This is an instrument used among the Kabiye to give a signal when hunting or when being attacked.

Von Massow describes some war situations in his diary: “When we appeared on the high ground at the top of the ridge, a colossal yowling erupted down in the village; men were seen taking up arms and women and children fleeing into the surrounding rocks. It was clear that there were hostile intentions” (Sebald 2014: 532). What Valentin von Massow here describes, in racist terms, as “yowling” was actually the sounding of an alarm. People used such sounds to express their fear of, and anger towards, an injustice, and to call their neighbours for help. They could also convey precise information by producing certain melodies with their whistles.

The looting of the material objects that are now held at the MVL is to be understood as a demonstration of power (cf. Edenheiser/GiBibl 2021: 193). This is evident from several excerpts from von Massow’s diary. For example, he describes the struggle against the people of the village “Bufale” as follows:

“About 2.30 I gave the order to fire, and after firing for about a quarter of an hour the rocks surrounding the camp were cleared. I immediately sent [troops] out in pursuit, on three sides, and between 4 and 5 o’clock the patrols returned, after having pursued the Búfale people a long way and having shot many dead. The village was given over to the flames. The spoils of war in the form of weapons and curiosities were very plentiful and the insolent riffraff were punished” (Sebald 2014: 541).

Further on, Valentin von Massow deplors the “impudence and disrespect” of the Kabiye:

“Kersting alone is to blame for this whole affair. By his actions and his avoidance of all larger villages, he has not instilled respect in the ~~bush people~~; indeed, they were all convinced that the white man was afraid of them. Hence the insolence against me. I could not tolerate that; the reputation of the white man and the authority of the German government would have been completely destroyed, and in the end I might have had to pay dearly for my misplaced humanity” (ibid.).

The looting is thus an expression of the colonial power relationship within which Valentin von Massow acted towards the Kabiye. They are to be understood in the context of his racist claim to power. Here, it is not only clearly evident what “punitive expeditions” in the colonial context meant to colonisers like Valentin von Massow, but also that the museum amassed collections of “ethnographic objects” from colonial spoils of war. Von Massow’s collections in Leipzig are thus indeed to be considered war booty.

Ohiniko Toffa

Ṣeḡba – lèḡba – leigba – elèḡba

The mostly abstract-figurative representations of *Ṣeḡba/lèḡba/leigba/elèḡbara* embody and represent a spiritual force or divine entity, express veneration, and facilitate communication with the deity (Lawal 2012: 32). Referred to as *lèḡba/elèḡbara*, this deity appeared in the religion at the time of the kingdom of Dahomé (located in present-day Bénin) and, in the form of a divine messenger, provided a link to the cosmology, and to the extensive pantheon of deities in the Yoruba religion of southern Nigeria. Even today, *Lèḡba*, with his various names, still has a firm place in the Vodun religion as a justiciable deity throughout the region, from Nigeria via Bénin and Togo to eastern Ghana. The figures, mostly made of an air-dried clay-earth mixture, from southern Bénin and Togo to the eastern Volta region in Ghana, prominently feature a vital life symbol – the phallus as a reference to the potent divine energy *ashe/àse*, which, according to the belief, sets the world in motion and keeps it going (ibid.: 13).

Emery Patrick Effiboley distinguishes different types of *lèḡba*, which in their earthen form seem to have originated in historical Dahomé. The *lèḡba* (in Gungbé or Fongbé) and *elèḡbara* (in ede-Yoruba) is generally made of sand. It is either anthropomorphic with a phallus at its front or a mound of sand to which rituals and sacrifices can be performed.

Catalogue cards and packaged *ṣeḡba* in the storages' working room. Photo: Tom Dachs on behalf of the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig



There are four types of *lègba*. The *Tolègba*, the *lègba* of the city, is usually erected at the entrance to cities. The *Axilègba*, or *lègba* of the market, is generally located at the centre of markets. Markets like Dantokpa in Cotonou and Houndjroto in Abomey, both in Bénin Republic, have their *lègba*. They are responsible for protecting the people who buy and sell at the market from disease and misfortune. The *Hennulègba* is the *lègba* placed in front of the family/community house, which is always supposed to protect against attacks on the house or the inhabitants.

All these three types of *lègba* are large and immobile. Finally, there is the personal *lègba*. This type of *lègba* is made for a person who has undergone initiation into the Yoruba-derived corpus of knowledge *Ifa* (which is also true for *Fa* in the Adja-fon area of southern Bénin, *Afan* in southern Togo and Ghana, and to some extent in Côte d'Ivoire). Afro-descendants in among others Cuba and Brazil have also inherited *Ifa*. In short, the *lègba* remains central to the life of a person and community in West Africa and beyond.

Ohiniko Toffa adds that *leigba* is an important god in the spiritual life organisation of many populations of Southern Togo, Ghana and Bénin. A *leigba* is a "human-like figure made of clay" (Spiess 1911: 223). The word *leigba* comes from the Fon language and basically means fertility. There is no equivalent for the word *leigba* in German, French or English. *Leigba* is a god of blessing, fertility, and protection for the people. There is not necessarily a transcendental relationship between him and the people in a village, *Du-Leigba*, or house *Awe-Leigba*, but a direct, horizontal interaction. *Leigba* is the protector of society.

Among the investigated groups of objects, *lègba* occur in the Grunitzky collection, for instance. They come from Atakpamé ([MAf 20484 a, b](#), [MAf 20486](#), [MAf 20487](#), [MAf 20488](#), [MAf 20489](#)). The *lègba* from Gütschow's collection are designated as deriving from "Togo hinterland" ([29575](#), [29580](#)). In contrast to most of the religious and ritual objects investigated, the *lègba* collected by Gütschow are recorded with a precise definition of their use and function, as well as with local designations. It is reasonable to assume that the transfer of knowledge about these objects to strangers was accompanied by a loss of their significance to their users and is certainly related to Christianisation.

Emery Patrick Effiboley asks the following questions in this context: The *lègba* in the collections of the two museums are all personal, since the other types are not movable. The question arises as to how so many *lègba* came to be appropriated. Were they stolen, or were they given away by their owners? If so, in exchange for what? Personal belongings are kept in private spaces. If they have ended up in the hands of a stranger, this probably means that a shift of signification has taken place resulting in their degradation and enabling their removal and export. This can also be explained by the fact that the people who procured the *lègba* were either colonial officials or missionaries. In the case of Adam Mischlich, it is evident that the latter could also become the former, which makes the significance of the collections even more complex.

Silvia Dolz, Emery Patrick Effiboley and Ohiniko Toffa

Attributes of the god *Xɛbioso*

At the MVL there are four objects related to the thunder god called *Xɛbioso* in Euegbe and Gengbé (*Xɛvioso* in Fongbé and in Gungbé). In the museum storeroom there is a forged iron object resembling the shape of a snake, which is catalogued under inventory number [MAf 20471](#). The catalogue card states that it is a “lightning serpent of iron. Attached to the house as a defence against the danger of lightning”. According to Ohiniko Toffa, the object represents a snake that flies at night, representing a deity of the southern Togo people.

Numbers [MAf 20473](#) and [MAf 20474](#) are two axes carved from wood, each fitted with four forged iron blades. According to the catalogue card, a priest takes two of the axes and strikes them together during a thunderstorm. According to Ohiniko Toffa, these two objects can be regarded as ritual objects used by a religious authority of the *Sô* religions, to which the thunder god, or god of justice, *Xɛbioso*, belongs. During thunderstorms, believers would run outside to clear up the damage done by the thunder god. According to Emery Patrick Effiboley, the ritual attributes were also used when a person died in a thunderstorm-related accident. The metal part of the axe symbolises the “fire of thunder”.

The staff with the inventory number [MAf 20475](#) was forged from iron. The note on the catalogue card states that the staff was an “altar” that was placed in every courtyard for protection against enemies and was covered with palm oil and white feathers. Again, Ohiniko Toffa has established that it was a recognition symbol of the *Sô* religions and of *Xɛbioso*; it was placed in front of house doors as a protective sign of the *Sô* deity. According to Emery Patrick Effiboley, such a staff is called *Asen* in Fongbé and *Asanyi* in Gungbé and could also represent a mobile “altar” representing the dead. According to Effiboley, every year during the commemoration ceremonies, food such as boiled beans or palm oil with maize flour was placed on the object as nourishment for the dead.

The catalogue cards for the “lightning serpent”, the “thunder axes”, and the “altar staff” all state that the respective object comes from southern Togo, and according to Ohiniko Toffa, they are associated with the *Sô* religions. On the basis of their regional classification, it is very likely that these objects belonged to the Ewe. Harry Grunitzky sold all four objects to the MVL in 1911. These shared characteristics may indicate that they were all acquired at the same time. Grunitzky was primarily active as a merchant on Togo’s coast and had relationships there with three women, Dédé from Lomé, as well as Nadou and Ayoko from Aného. As a result of these probably hierarchical relationships, Grunitzky would presumably have had easier access to such objects.

Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes

Historical photographs

The collections assembled by Adolf Diehl and Oskar Marx contain historical photographs taken in the colony. Both men were active as photographers (cf. Sebald 2014: 122). In the project, we discussed the historical photographs, especially with regard to the ethical question of whether and how the photographs should be published as part of the project outcomes. There was consensus that the photographs should be regarded as “sensitive objects” and not be published online.

Colonial photographs are among the most important research materials in colonial historiography. They provide insights into the colonial context. They illustrate moments and events in the colonial era according to the interests of the photographer. With this perspective, colonial histories can be written and recounted using the photographs. At the same time, the fact should not be ignored that the camera was an instrument of colonisation and colonial policy. Most photographs served the purpose of colonial propaganda and are thus part of the rhetoric legitimising colonialism. Cameras and photographs were instruments of power in the colonial era. Colonial photographs must therefore, in my opinion, be treated sensitively. Their use must not be one-dimensional, i.e. it must not reproduce racist, colonial stereotypes. Their publication can be very hurtful. Using them without the collaboration of experts from the former colonies is a neo-colonial practice. Many colonial photos show portraits of colonised people or areas in the colony. The rights of the people or communities concerned must be respected; this is part of postcolonial work. I understand this consideration as a prerequisite for the ethical and moral use of colonial photographs.

Colonial photographs can potentially be used for scientific purposes in the framework of such equitable collaboration. Exhibitions with experts can deconstruct the colonial gaze and show colonial history. Especially in a society where colonial history is not yet so well known, colonial photographs can help to combat forgetting. It would be ideal to organise these research projects, and thus the transfer of knowledge, in a transnational way, so that they help both Germany and the former colonies. Research projects on colonial photographs are also highly desirable. Their digitisation should be strongly supported. Access for researchers from the regions of origin (former colonies) should be granted free of charge.

What I think is very problematic is to use these photos as museum objects and send them out into the world (online) without control. The same is also true for all other museum objects. German colonialism has consequences. People in the former colonies and in the Afro-diaspora, especially those who know this history, find the consequences extremely controversial. Colonialism is an ethical issue for museums. Institutions must not continually profit from this injustice, but must learn from it. I see the museum as obliged to take on this task of educating and enlightening.

Ohiniko Toffa

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Ohiniko Toffa

IV.

EVALUATION

OF OUTCOMES

EVALUATION OF THE PRIORITISATION PROCESS:

object selection process as a research outcome

The selection of objects was adjusted several times during the first few months of the project period, especially for the Leipzig collections. It quickly became clear that this was a necessary part of the project process. It is therefore to be regarded as the first research outcome from the project: Only after examining the groups of objects did it become clear just how strongly the appropriation contexts of the objects in the collections were shaped by violence, and we therefore saw the need to adapt the research tasks accordingly. The prioritisation of certain groups of objects was thus only possible after examining the holdings and was an integral part of the research work.

For further work, and also for future research projects, it is important to bear in mind that examination of the holdings themselves is a basic prerequisite for the selection of objects and the development of research questions. Specifying these in advance is not advisable in respect of either content or research strategy. However, there must be a certain degree of open-mindedness when formulating the objectives. Especially in collaborative research contexts, there must be room to jointly reconsider the research questions in relation to the proposal after the team has come together, as well as ongoing consultation with the network established as part of the project.

EVALUATION OF THE DUAL METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH:

biographies of colonial actors and object histories

The methodological approach of researching provenance on the basis of both the biographies of colonial actors and specific object histories has proven to be a suitable strategy for postcolonial provenance research.

Gaining information about the colonial actors often made it possible to reconstruct the routes of their travels inside the colony and in many cases to draw conclusions about the specific regions where they were present, the contexts in which they appropriated objects, and the practices they employed. In addition, a biographical approach made it possible to gain insights into the milieus and mentalities of the colonial actors and to identify different forms of violent dispossession. In particular, the development of networks among the actors and the snowball effects that often resulted were possible by using this method.

At the same time, viewing the individual objects and groups of objects in the collections analytically made it possible to shift the focus away from the perspective of the colonial actors. The objects were not to be presented only in connection with the colonial actors and reduced to the context of their procurement for German museums. Rather, we sought to use our networks to identify other histories and affiliations associated with them. Nevertheless, the most extensive research done in the project concerned the routes and practices of the colonial actors; evaluation of the resulting findings may also be beneficial for future projects.

EVALUATION OF THE PROVENANCES ESTABLISHED

Forms of appropriation in the context of colonial violence

In the research project, eight groups of objects in museum collections were investigated, all of which have in common that they were appropriated during German colonial rule in the colony of Togo. This historical context is characterised by structural violence, and it is against this background that the object appropriations must be evaluated. In the course of the research, we have identified different modes of appropriation in which this violence was expressed in different ways.

For the appropriations that derive from the activities of Hans Gruner, Gaston Thierry, Valentin von Massow, and Adam Mischlich, an explicitly violent context could be identified. However, some differentiation is necessary here. For example, there is documentary proof that Thierry and von Massow appropriated objects through looting. In the case of Hans Gruner, it was not possible to clearly determine how he appropriated the collections. Gruner obtained the objects as part of his work as an expedition leader, in which he acted as a military leader and negotiator. His case, like many others, points to the structural violence within which the objects were procured. It also shows that further detailed research is needed to enable even more accurate conclusions to be drawn about the specific modes of appropriation.

In Mischlich's case, on the other hand, evidence of a different form of violence was established: The documents describing his appropriation practices state that he acted "with cunning", rather than physical violence, in order to bring religious objects into his possession. As a former missionary, Mischlich was also part of the system of epistemic violence that found expression in the Christianisation of the colonised population.

We also set the object procurements by the colonial actors Adolf Diehl, Harry Grunitzky, and Ernst Gütschow, who were active in commercial networks, against the background of the structural violence inherent in German colonial rule. There is no evidence of explicit physical violence, theft, or fraud. As traders and/or entrepreneurs, they profited from the colonial system of exploitation in a less direct way. While Gütschow probably never spent time in the colony, Adolf Diehl and Harry Grunitzky were involved in everyday colonial life.

The same applies to Oskar Marx. The biography of Adolf Diehl demonstrates how interconnected colonial traders and military actors were, and how they pursued common interests. Diehl not only acquired war booty from people like Valentin von Massow, but was also able to have objects manufactured for him to sell to German museums because of his active involvement in colonial economic networks.

Both Diehl and Gruner also appropriated objects which, according to their letters to the MVL or the information on the catalogue cards, had been found “in the ground by the path” or came “from the cooking site of the middle soldiers” (catalogue cards to [MAf 11676 a-d](#) and [MAf 11674](#), Hans Gruner, see chapter “Sokpé stones”), and took them without permission. Diehl did not even shy away from appropriating ancestral remains in this way: “The family [...] placed the skull at the door of the former home of the deceased, from where I (Diehl) procured it!” (catalogue card to MAf 03509, Adolf Diehl)

Colonial mentalities

Within this context of structural violence, the different motivations of the colonial actors are of interest for postcolonial provenance research. This means drawing conclusions about the colonial attitudes of the actors and their underlying intentions in procuring the objects.

For several actors, it was possible to identify a clear economic interest. This is most strikingly evident in the case of Gaston Thierry, who personally enriched himself by conducting raids and thereby triggered a colonial scandal. It was established that Adolf Diehl, Harry Grunitzky, and Ernst Gütschow also had financial interests, in some cases combined with a desire for prestige. Diehl’s strong interest in commercial profit, for example, went hand in hand with a desire to be involved in museum, natural science, and ethnographic circles. Gütschow, on the other hand, strove above all for social recognition within the Dresden elite, which is why the prospect of being awarded a medal by the King of Saxony was an important motivation for him to donate a collection to the MVD.

Von Massow’s early death prevented him from selling the objects he had collected himself. However, in a letter to von Luschan, he stated that one of the reasons for his looting was that he hoped to get into contact with ethnographic museums. His motives were likewise a desire for recognition, as well as an amateur interest in ethnography. A financial intention cannot be ruled out either. Von Massow also openly stated that his motivation for looting was to punish the subjugated population groups and to obtain personal war trophies.

In contrast to Valentin von Massow and Gaston Thierry, who died as early as 1899 and 1904, Hans Gruner only came to write his memoirs about the DTE, based primarily on the diaries from his colonial period, between 1938 and his death in 1943 (Sebald 1997: 8-11). Thus, it is highly likely that a certain process of reflection led to Gruner possibly choosing not to describe the contexts in which objects were procured, or describing them in a less specific way than von Massow and Thierry, who did not get round to editing their diaries for publication after their colonial service. As a naturalist, Gruner’s memoirs contain significantly longer passages on his scientific observations. His donations to the MVL were probably substantially driven by scientific interest.

However, there are also indications in Gruner's work of objects being appropriated following direct violence, such as after the punishment and execution of the *Dente* priest Obosomfo (SMB-ZA, EM 1386/96, Hans Gruner to Felix von Luschan, 23 November 1896). Gruner's activities clearly reflect the close links between scientific research and military conquest.

Oskar Marx, who presumably purchased objects at markets, wanted to collect personal souvenirs. The objects were kept in the family for decades and were only later donated to the MVD.

In Adam Mischlich's case, three different factors play a role in his appropriation of objects: the mission context, his aspirations as a scientist, and colonial political interests during his period of colonial service. The groups of objects that the MVL received via Mischlich are unusual in being mostly objects of a religious nature. Objects that missionaries procured from the local population and sent home were used, on the one hand, as examples of "paganism" for the training of further missionaries, and, on the other hand, they served as legitimisation of the mission, as proof of missionary successes, and of the supposed superiority of Christianity (Bozsa 2019: 5). The museum's in-house archival records on Mischlich also show that his scientific ambitions continued to be of great importance during his time as station director and district administrator. During this period, he attempted to obtain a doctorate for his research (MVL 1909/68: 42ff., Adam Mischlich). However, the correspondence between Mischlich and the MVL also reveals that he believed the resistance of the population could only be broken if their most important religious objects were taken away from them (MVL 1906/41: 86, Adam Mischlich).

Examining the attitudes and motivations of the colonial actors provides information about the different ways in which such actors benefited from German colonial rule in Togo. The appropriations can thus be placed in the contemporary historical context and be seen as part of the *modus operandi* of colonial power. They also often provide concrete clues as to the origin of the objects.

The role of colonial networks

The research has demonstrated that there was close interaction between the colonial actors. They procured objects in the same places, and they exchanged and sold them among themselves.

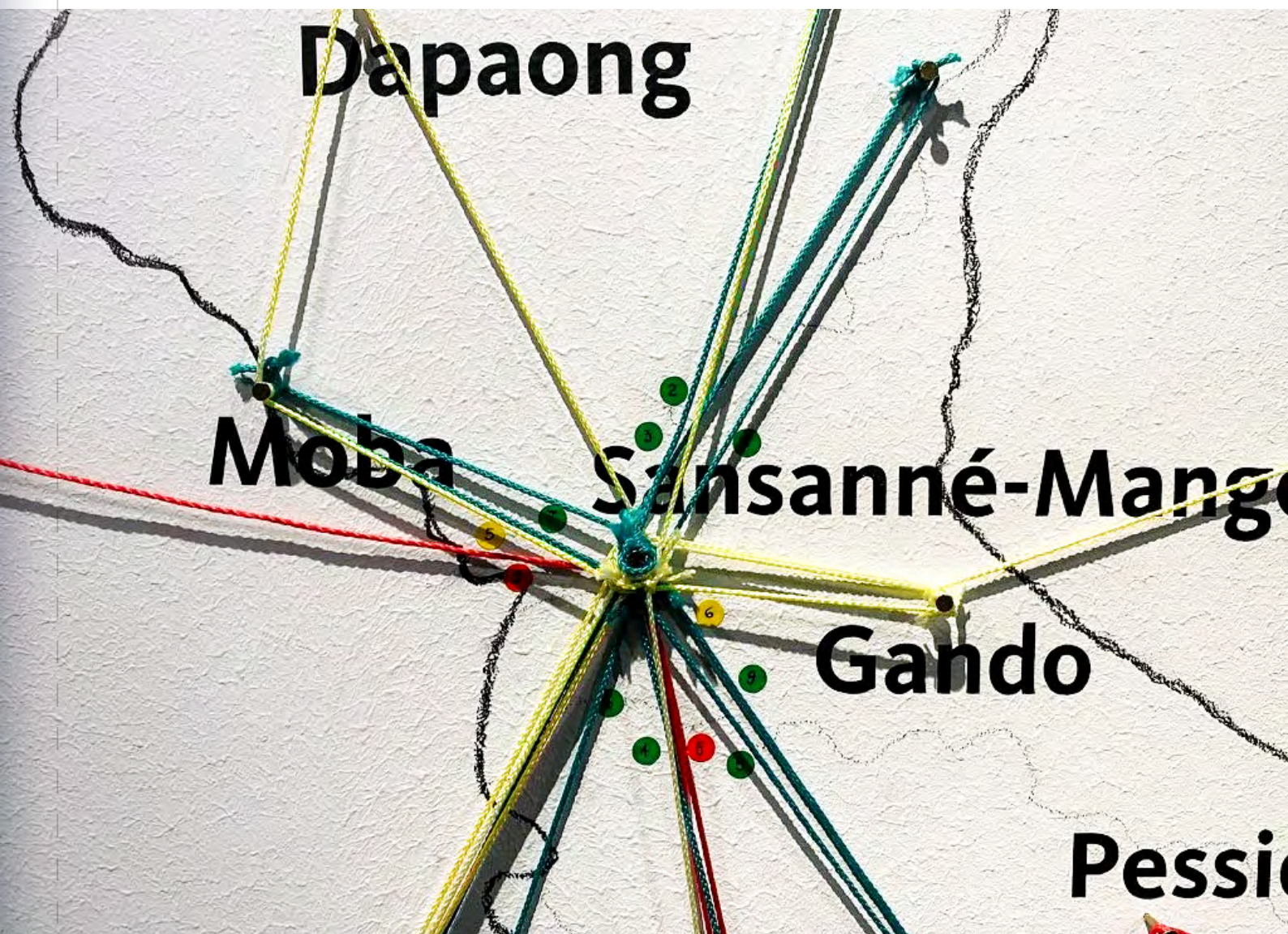
The archival research revealed, for example, that Diehl purchased objects from von Massow's estate at auction and sold them to the MVL. These objects derived from von Massow's looting during the campaigns against the Dagomba and Kabiye. Overlapping and simultaneity in the procurement of objects also became abundantly clear through the work on the Prep Room exhibition. In the wall installation, we traced the routes of Gruner, Thierry, and von Massow, including relevant dates; thus, the campaigns which they coordinated and carried out together, and in which they all looted objects, became patently obvious.

Grunitzky and Gütschow were both in contact with Alfred Mansfeld, who was active in the colonial service (see chapter on Ernst Friedrich Gütschow). This points to their integration into a network in the German Empire that profited from the trade in objects from the colonies. The systematic investigation of this network will be helpful in researching the paths taken by other groups of objects in the ethnographic museums of that time.

The research findings about the different actors always converged and complemented each other. Sometimes a small snippet of information would open up a whole new set of connections. This shows that postcolonial provenance research must be approached by thinking beyond individual actors in order to achieve comprehensive results.

In addition, the analysis of historical networks showed that actors in the ethnographic museums (Karl Weule, Felix von Luschan, Arnold Jacobi) were heavily involved in the appropriation and trading of objects. The Leipzig museum was particularly prominent in this regard during the era of German colonisation in Togo.

Section of the wall installation showing the routes of the colonial military actors on a current map of Togo in the exhibition “Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the ‘Prep Room’”, opened 5 October 2022. Photo: Friedrich von Bose



EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES IN RESPECT OF RESTITUTION

From the commencement of this project, consideration was given to the possibility of future restitutions. The reason for selecting objects whose procurement was likely to have involved the explicit use of violence was that priority was to be given to the investigation of those objects with a view to their possible restitution. The establishment and activation of transnational research networks was indispensable in doing this.

The provenance research has revealed that the direct use of violence was instrumental in the procurement of many objects and thus in them having been acquired by the museums. In other cases, the structural context of violence under the conditions of colonial rule was elaborated.

As a starting point, it has proven to be advisable to first talk to partners about objects and groups of objects where an explicitly violent appropriation practice is unquestionably evident. In our case, this applied, in particular, to objects that were demonstrably stolen in the context of war or whose origin reveals other ethical and moral problems. Specifically, the objects to which this applies are as follows:

- Two drums which Adolf Diehl sold to the MVL and which had been stolen in 1895 in the context of the colonial war against the Tové.
- All objects selected for the project that derive from the estate of Valentin von Massow. These are largely his war booty, acquired by the MVL partly via his mother, Marianne von Kuylenstjerna, and partly via Adolf Diehl.
- All objects that were transferred to the ownership of the MVL via Gaston Thierry.
- Two human skulls that were found during the project but were not subjected to further investigation. One of them came to the MVD via Gütschow. The other was given to the MVL by Diehl. These are ancestral remains of people in the colony of Togo, to which a further research project must definitely be devoted.

Marlena Barnstorff-Brandes, Friedrich von Bose, Ricarda Rivoir and Ohiniko Toffa

EVALUATION AS REGARDS TRANSPARENCY AND INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

The cooperation endeavours within the framework of the project have highlighted the themes of trust, justice, transparency, and responsibility as being key to collaboration between German and Togolese or Ghanaian research partners. Upon establishment of contact, people often immediately asked how the objects had come to be in Germany, and why Europeans had taken possession of them in the first place. Many expressed their consternation about it and voiced the opinion that the objects should be returned. This was sometimes accompanied by criticism of their own governments in the West African states. The demands for restitution often also included a desire to reclaim their colonial and cultural history and to pass it on to the next generations. At many meetings the desire was also expressed that this colonial history should be researched more intensively and that the research findings should be made accessible beyond academic circles. The lack of transparency of German museums and other institutions holding such objects was also an important topic, with many people expressing their displeasure about it. By transparency, people in the relevant countries, especially researchers, mean access to museums, so that they can find out where which objects are located, and so that they can see them. The memory of losses is strongly present in some places, for example in Bassar. The project staff and the SES have tried to act in a trustworthy and transparent way when making contacts, by showing the objects that are being researched.

Establishing trust between German and West African research partners (especially in Togo and Ghana) is sometimes difficult, because in many societies people have had adverse experiences when working with European researchers/cooperation partners. This manifests itself in initial mistrust and reticence. This is not because people do not want their objects back – rather, they ask themselves why now (temporality). This mistrust can easily be traced back to the colonial experiences of these societies, and partly also to their experiences of working with European researchers. For this reason, cooperation with members of the Afro- or Togolese diaspora was very effective and sometimes helped in building up trusting relationships with the local communities in Togo and Ghana. The openness cultivated in the project regarding the difficult questions arising from German colonial history – feelings of guilt, a firm position in favour of restitution, reparations, reappraisal and commemoration of colonialism, and critiquing racism – have often persuaded our research partners to collaborate with us.

Ohiniko Toffa

Postcolonial provenance research from the standpoint of project administration: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Provenance research projects that are committed to a collaborative mode of operation and international cooperation find themselves facing a number of challenges. In the course of the project, a number of problems and administrative-structural obstacles became apparent, and we consider it important to reflect on these not only in the interests of the project itself, but also with regard to provenance research more broadly. This section therefore focuses, in particular, on structural obstacles to cooperation with international partners and on recommendations arising in response to these.

International mobility

Owing to international inequality in freedom of movement and the unequal distribution of mobility rights (Kirsch 2019), international research partnerships are faced, first and foremost, with obstacles resulting from the global border control regimen. In terms of freedom of travel, Germany ranks third in the world (Henley & Partners 2023). Whereas holders of German citizenship are free to travel to 190 states/territories of the world, the majority of international researchers have to undergo lengthy visa procedures in order to obtain entry, residence, and especially work permits for the EU Schengen Area. These shift the border to the place of application, and the specific procedures make global inequality blatantly tangible. Applicants often have to wait an unreasonably long time before an appointment can be made and then submit an array of personal information and evidence, which is often perceived as harassment. Those going through this procedure require close support from the inviting institution. In addition, applicants have to cover the costs associated with the visa application – including, for example, the expense of travelling to the location where the application has to be made, which is often far away. This, too, needs to be taken into account from the outset when drawing up the time schedule and budget plan. Expenses should be reimbursed as unbureaucratically as possible, especially in cases where such costs are deemed to constitute hardship – for example, if multiple trips to the issuing consulate are necessary. This requires a high level of commitment on the part of the inviting institution.

Time and again, visa applications submitted by international research partners of museums and universities, or from participants in exchange programmes, are rejected. The reason often given is that there are doubts about the person's intention to leave the Schengen Area again. In 2022, for example, the restrictive implementation of this border control regimen prevented the entry of Cameroonian colleagues from the universities of Dschang and Buea for the final conference of a provenance research project funded by the German Lost Art Foundation. This incident was picked up by the media. The team of the Department of Modern Art History at the TU Berlin wrote a statement demanding that international exchange on the basis of equality is indispensable for researching the

circumstances of appropriation in a colonial context (Steffes-Halmer 2022). Yrine Matchinda, one of the researchers in the project whose visa application was rejected, describes the incident as indisputably racist (ibid.).

Recent statements by politicians expressing commitment to transnational cooperation on the part of German academic and cultural institutions stand in stark contrast with the coloniality perpetuated by this border control regimen. Particularly in light of the fact that postcolonial provenance research is an important element in addressing colonial injustice, what is needed in the first place is a visa policy that enables international cooperation for this purpose, instead of preventing it.

Framework conditions for international research activities

In the context of this project, favourable conditions existed in that no visa procedures were necessary. The main researcher in the project, Ohiniko Toffa, was given a temporary employment contract in the public sector, subject to social insurance contributions. This was facilitated by the fact that he was already resident in Germany. Unless their visa is valid for the entire duration of their stay, guest researchers who are not EU citizens, or citizens of the European Economic Area, and who are staying in Germany for longer than three months must otherwise apply for a residence permit. In addition to proof of adequate financial resources, this also requires proof of living accommodation, which can be a significant obstacle in view of the tight housing market in major German cities and the discrimination often experienced when seeking to rent residential property. Close support is therefore particularly important in these steps as well, since the way the authorities deal with people coming to start work in Germany once again typifies the structural discrimination and racism experienced by guest researchers.

The awarding of **scholarships** for visiting researchers, on the other hand, is confronted with other difficulties. For example, the tax-exempt status of the award is dependent on a so-called *Angemessenheitserfordernis* (literally: 'requirement of reasonableness'), which stipulates that the amount of the scholarship may not exceed the recipient's income from previous employment. The payment of an adequate maintenance grant for a stay in Germany is thus in direct conflict with the regulations, which do not take into account differences in income around the world. These regulations testify to a bureaucratic provincialism that makes international cooperation and networking extremely difficult.

A number of challenges also arise in the context of provenance research projects if – beyond the scope of scholarships and employment contracts with German institutions – **service contracts and remuneration agreements** are concluded with international partners, or with research partners who are resident and work outside Germany. First of all, the requirements and procedures for concluding contracts and agreements under German law are not easy to ascertain and to understand. To ensure the greatest possible transparency, these need to be summarised and elucidated in advance.



Group interview with Timtoni Cultural Dance Group in Yendi on 27 November 2022. Photo: Jan König

This particularly concerns providing clear information about the treatment of tax deduction according to the reverse charge procedure²¹, which is something that not even those responsible for administration are generally familiar with. Failure to take this into account in advance, or receiving the relevant information only afterwards, may mean that the contracting party has to accept a 19% loss of earnings if it is not possible for the institution to add this amount to the originally agreed fee.

In order to reduce bureaucratic obstacles, it is advisable not only to produce translations of the documents in advance, but also to prepare leaflets with relevant information on, among other things, how to formulate a quotation and what must appear on an invoice.

The payment of remuneration only after the research activities have been completed (“payment after delivery”) forces project participants to find funds in advance for travel and accommodation. In addition, administrative processes and (international) financial transfer procedures often mean that there is an unreasonable delay before remuneration is received. One way of handling this problem constructively within the given framework conditions is to make provision, where possible, for partial payments for the performance of preparatory work and cash payments upon commencement of work. The institution administering the research funds should deal with the travel and accommodation costs

21 According to the reverse charge procedure, liability for VAT is reversed, which means that the German institution that awards the service contract or remuneration agreement, and is thus the recipient of the service, must pay the VAT. The applicable VAT rate must therefore be taken into account when planning the budget.

separately in advance. Furthermore, when drawing up financing plans it makes sense to take account not only of international transfer fees, but also of the necessary expenses for liability, accident, and health insurance for research trips.

Research-related costs are often difficult to calculate in advance. This applies to research in Germany as well as to research activities abroad. As the research trip to Yendi showed, especially in the case of qualitative, conversation-based projects, accounting procedures that require the submission of original receipts are incompatible with reality. Consequently, when carrying out research visits, especially outside Germany, sufficient overheads should be provided for in the project budget.

Project planning and project management

For future provenance research projects, consideration should be given to including not only a flat rate for administrative costs, but also funds for employing a project assistant. This applies, in particular, to longer-term projects that are to be internationally based. The project assistant can take on communicative tasks as well as the planning of international mobility and research visits, thus contributing to the removal of obstacles in international collaboration. This person can also facilitate orientation and navigation at the host location, especially in view of visiting researchers' experiences of racism and discrimination while staying in Germany, which have also occurred in the context of our project.

In general, greater attention should be paid to promoting the establishment of an international network when drawing up the project plans, including milestone planning and the preparation of work and financing plans. Appropriate resources should become part of the funding and financing plans so that the mutual exchange of ideas, as well as dialogue formats and mediation and transparency measures, can be successfully implemented.

Julia von Sigsfeld

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT ON THE SES

In the course of its duration of just over two years, the project has not only highlighted many problems and expedited ongoing processes of reflection, but has also evoked questions that will have a seminal influence on the future work of the SES. First and foremost, these concern provenance research and the ensuing measures themselves. The coloniality of the collections, and the proven history of violent appropriation in the case of a significant proportion of the objects investigated in the project, challenge the institution to take a proactive stance with regard to further procedures, some of which are outlined below.

The desired sustainability of the project is reflected in the further development and maintenance of the national and international research network. This includes providing the structures that make it possible to maintain and further intensify the networks that have already been established.

The GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig. Photo: Friedrich von Bose



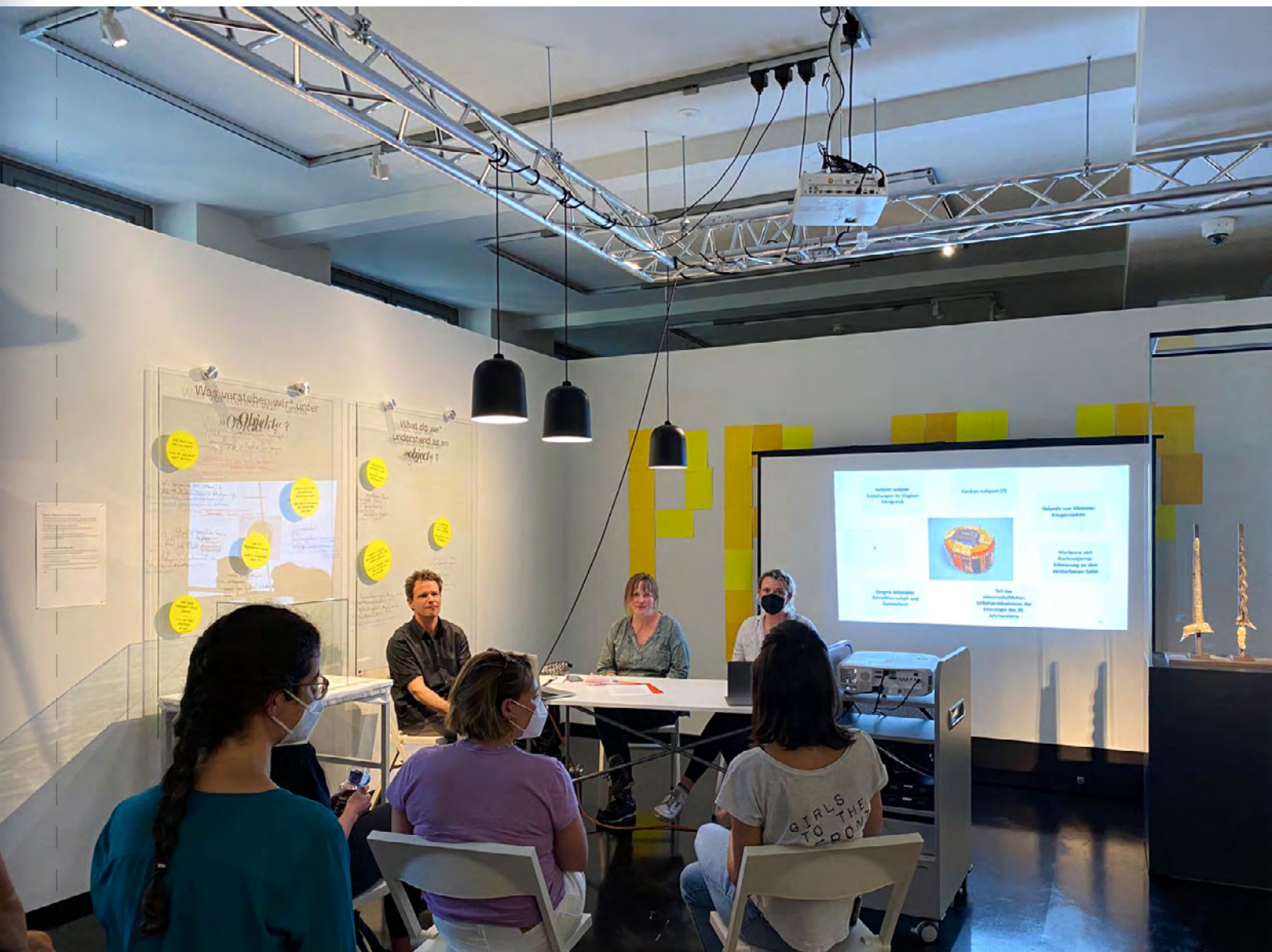
The fact that these networks have been established within the framework of a third-party funded research project means that the continuation of this work must be handled under the existing structures. This is hardly possible under the given staffing conditions. Maintaining contact with the partners, which is currently done in a mostly informal way with specific individuals, must urgently be raised to a formal level. Hence, an important lesson to be learned from the project is that the structure of the museums needs to be substantially strengthened in order to continue the work that has been started, to avoid disappointing the newly gained trust of the research partners, and to enable further systematic provenance research. Last but not least, it must be emphasised how important it is to continue networking with relevant research projects. This should include the opportunities for cooperation that are currently being considered, or are already being carried out, in national and regional museums, as well as in regional initiatives in Togo and neighbouring African states in collaboration with German research centres.

A successful basis for research work is, of course, the coordinated cooperation of the museum departments. In addition, however, in the course of the implementation of the research, but especially with regard to the processing of outcomes, there is a need for coordinated and harmonised collection, archive, and data management. Structural consolidation is thus also necessary within the SES museums in the SKD so that research data, archival and literature research findings are secured, linked together, and made permanently accessible for future research and other uses. A basis for this is provided by the DAPHNE museum database, which holds a large number of the digitised archival records and indexed documents. The associated Online Collection provides an insight into the collections investigated in the project so far. Furthermore, the historical documents of the three ethnographic museums of the SES are continuously being digitised and made available on the Cumulus platform.²²

Finally, a central aspect of provenance research is not only cooperation with partners across national borders; it will also increasingly involve improving accessibility for interested researchers, and especially for actors and partners in the so-called societies of origin. First and foremost, of course, this concerns enabling them to visit the museums and providing opportunities for them to conduct research and undertake projects (cf. Labischinski 2020, Effiboley 2008: 125-132, 2005: 79-90). They must also be given access to databases and be able to navigate them as easily as possible. Furthermore, they should be able to make entries themselves and comment on them. This requires, first of all, that the databases must be available in different languages. This is not yet possible with the internal database DAPHNE. Even the publicly displayed Online Collection is still only available in German, which of course runs significantly counter to the declared primacy of transparency. The historical documents collection on the Cumulus platform likewise only contains digitised German-language files from the colonial era; these largely consist of handwritten letters in historical German cursive script. Transcripts of files in modern German script should be made available here in the future, as this would make them potentially more accessible and easier to translate for research and network partners.

22 See Cumulus Plattform (<https://ses-documentation.skd.museum/main/thumbnailview>).

Furthermore, education and transparency in the exhibition and outreach programmes, and especially in the databases and other interfaces with the outside world, are of essential importance. In the case of the SKD, the latter point mainly concerns the Online Collection, but also the various and increasingly important cooperation relationships with other digital platforms.²³



Prep Room Talk No. 1 “On the Origin of Colonial-era Collections from Togo” with Marlena Barnstorf-Brandes, Ricarda Rivoir and Friedrich von Bose on 28 July 2022. Photo: Julia von Sigsfeld

As regards making the collections transparent at various levels, important questions have been raised in the project that affect the work of the SES across the board, first and foremost: How can the importance of making the holdings transparent be reconciled with the objections to the public presentation of the objects? What impact does this discussion, as we have outlined it here, have on the handling of the collection holdings in their entirety? Shouldn’t “transparency” also mean making the debates about suitable

23 See CCC-Portal (<https://ccc.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/>) and Digital Benin (<https://digitalbenin.org/>).

forms of public presentation comprehensible, as well as the struggle to find appropriate language and establish acceptable terminology? What formats can be found to convey these fundamental questions of transparency as well as challenges and changes in the use of terms?

The research project coincided with a residency by the curators Anna Szöke and Franka Schneider in connection with the MVL's Prep Room project (see chapter "Exhibiting Research – Exhibiting as Research: The Project in the 'Prep Room'"). The two guest researchers initiated extensive reflections on the (often colonial/racist) terms and concepts embedded in the museum's knowledge base, and they engaged in discussions with the museum staff about the categorisations of object and subject. Ohiniko Toffa was instrumental in the inreach and outreach project with his reflections on underlying ontologies.

This ongoing process of sensitisation with regard to coloniality and the epistemic and ontological foundations underlying the museum holdings goes hand in hand with the development of strategies and practices. These include continuous reappraisal of terminology and language in the DAPHNE and OC, the digitisation of the collections, and particularly of sensitive objects, the provision of an appropriate setting for viewing the objects, as well as considering fundamental issues surrounding their public display, especially to avoid the risk of replicating colonial violence and racism.

Provenance research can only take place productively and, above all, collaboratively under the premise of improved accessibility and the ability to shape the research process – specifically, through the availability of suitable working tools (cf. Scholz/da Costa Oliveira/Dörk 2021), since this enables knowledge about the collections to be expanded, jointly reflected upon, and added to, by people in many places around the world. Hence, the databases are no longer to be understood merely as repositories of information and "channels of communication", but as shared, decentrally organised research infrastructures. As such, they can then help open up and decentralise the research process itself.

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Sometimes a small snippet of information would open up a whole new set of connections. This shows that postcolonial provenance research must be approached by thinking beyond individual actors in order to achieve comprehensive results.

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Ricarda Rivoir and Ohiniko Toffa*

V.

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VI. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DMB Deutscher Museumsbund
- DTE German Togo Hinterland Expedition
("Deutsche Togo-Hinterland-Expedition")
- MVD Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden
- MVL GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig
- OC Online Collection
- SES Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen
- SKD Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

At many meetings the desire was also expressed that this colonial history should be researched more intensively and that the research findings should be made accessible beyond academic circles.

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