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Germany's history of returning human remains and objects from colonial contexts:

An overview of successful cases and unsettled claims
between 1970 and 2021

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I. Introduction

Returning, and talking about if, when, and how to return human remains, cultural objects and artistic items is currently one of the most present topics among people active in the cultural heritage sector: in German cultural politics and the media, in the museum world and the civil society the subject is ubiquitous. These discussions literally materialise in the centre of the German capital, with its reconstruction of a Prussian castle which contains, among other collections, the Ethnologisches Museum with its contested objects, for example the so-called Benin Bronzes from Nigeria. Since 1972 the Nigerian government has made the public claim that these objects be displayed in the place from where they were once looted (Savoy 2021, 27). Concerning the return and requests for the return of objects and human remains from colonial contexts, the 1970s mark a turning point. In 1970 UNESCO devised the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* to keep at bay the theft of cultural goods from recently decolonised states (Förster 2019, 89), and with a speech at the United Nations in 1973 the President of Zaire Mobutu Sese Seko brought the subject of cultural return into its general assembly (ibid.; Fitschen 2004). The claims for returning objects with colonial contexts from museums and collections also created a stir in both West and East Germany at the time, not only in the local museum world but also in the press and on a political level (Strugalla 2020). Today, these discussions have been largely forgotten or, as art historian Bénédicte Savoy puts it, they have been 'successfully repressed' ('erfolgreich verdrängt') (Savoy 2021, 7).

This working paper provides an overview of returns from and requests for returns submitted to West and East German museums, collections and private people since 1970. We follow the recommendations of the German Museums Association (Deutscher Museumsbund) in their definition of colonial contexts which are 'regarded as circumstances and processes that have their roots either in formal colonial rule or in colonial structures outside formal colonial rule' (Deutscher Museumsbund 2021, 26). The working paper is the result of a three-month research in autumn 2021 and reflects the literature available to its authors at the time along with extensive correspondence with some of those involved in the (envisaged) returns. It does not claim completeness on the subject of returns

and requests for returns from German institutions since the 1970s but is a first attempt to collect and bundle all the known cases in order to enable further research. The paper can be read as a continuation of the comprehensive working paper by Lars Müller (2021a) which deals with returns from a global perspective, from 1867 until the 1970s. In his paper, Müller also raises the issue of returns and requests related to Germany. However, these early German cases will not be dealt with further in this paper unless the case is protracted and can be traced beyond the 1970s.

For the sake of completeness, we briefly recap the early German cases here: the Mafue Stone was returned to Liberia in 1925 after it had been brought to the (then) Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg (Müller 2021a, 18). The sultan of the German colony of Togo claimed, without success, two ropes that came into the possession of German soldiers in 1894/95 (*ibid.*, 19). German ethnologist Leo Frobenius purchased the bronze Olokun head from a priest in Yorubaland in 1910. Thereafter, the legitimacy of the purchase was questioned both by the priest himself and also by the British authorities (*ibid.*, 20). In 1935, Oba Akenzua II of Benin unsuccessfully claimed two stools located in the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (*ibid.*, 21). In the colony German South West Africa, the German scientist Waldemar Belck removed the skeleton of Jacobus Hendrick from his grave in 1885, whereupon his daughter reclaimed his remains. Though Belck returned a skull to her, sources suggest, it was not her father's (*ibid.*, 27). After World War I, the *Treaty of Versailles* mentioned the returns of the skull of Mkwavinyika Munyigumba Mwamuyinga, known as Mkwawa, and the original Koran of Caliph Osman to the King of Hejaz. To the latter, Germany announced that the Koran was not in the country (*ibid.*, 30). Also, after World War I China received all astronomical instruments which had been removed by Imperial Germany during the war 1900/1901 (as mentioned in the *Treaty of Versailles*) (*ibid.*). In 1931 China claimed three volumes of the Yongle Dadian Encyclopedia which were returned in 1955 from the German Democratic Republic (GDR), together with ten flags from the so-called Boxer Rebellion (*ibid.*, 42/43; see also Hüsgen 2021). In 1911 Samoans claimed two skulls that are still in Berlin today since two different skulls were repatriated at the time (Müller 2021a, 54).

Some cases in this working paper, which only covers the time after 1970, have been researched extensively elsewhere, some barely have left traces for us to follow, and on others research is planned for the near future. The information accessible on each case varies greatly, hence, some cases are described in more detail than others. As the focus of the paper is the return of objects and human remains, we do not claim completeness when dealing with either the colonial context in which they were originally removed nor do we delve into the importance that returns hold for the receiving communities and nations today. Throughout the paper, we use the term *restitution* to describe the return of objects and the term *repatriation* to describe the return of human remains. However, we acknowledge the manifold discussions around terminology when describing these processes (Müller 2021a, 10). In this paper, we do

not define what a *request* for restitution is, but have instead collected all claims to objects and human remains made until October 2021:¹ from official claims made by state representatives or institutions to their German counterparts, but also claims articulated in the media or at public events. The paper is divided into four categories: human remains, hominin remains (palaeoanthropology), animal remains (paleontology) and cultural objects. The listing starts in South America and moves west. To ease the overview and better facilitate further investigation, all institutions in Germany are highlighted in the margin column. They are referred to by their German names used at the time.

1 Should a case have been overlooked, we would appreciate additions or corrections. Please contact the authors and the German Lost Art Foundation at: larissa.foerster@kulturgutverluste.de. We would like to thank Larissa Förster and Sarah Fründt for the exchange and support regarding this working paper.

II. Human Remains

Anatomisches
Institut
Universität Bonn

Brazil

The process of returning the skull of a man known in Germany by the name Joachim Quäck to Brazil has so far been mentioned only in newspaper articles and online, aside from a short publication by Karl Schilling (2011) who personally handled the return.² A representative of the Brazilian city Jequitinhonha inquired in September 2010 if the Anatomisches Institut at the University of Bonn was willing to return the skull of Joachim Quäck to the city, which would subsequently return the skull to the deceased person's ancestors of the Krenak tribe (Schilling 2011, 43). Quäck had accompanied Prinz Maximilian Alexander Philipp zu Wied when he returned to Germany after his research journey to Brazil in 1817/1818. Quäck died in Neuwied on 1 June 1834 of a liver disease, and his skull was subsequently handed over to the court physician, through whom it ended up in the anatomical collection (ibid., 42).

In 2011 Schilling, director of the institute, was personally present as the skull was returned on the occasion of Jequitinhonha's Bicentennial on 15 May 2011. The skull was handed over by the German deputy consul general, Marcus Hass, to the mayor of the city, who subsequently handed it over to the elders and representatives of the Krenak tribe (ibid., 43).

Paraguay

Charité –
Universitäts-
medizin Berlin

In 2012 human remains of an Aché girl were buried in Asunción, Paraguay. The Aché community named the girl Kryygi, when alive she had been called Damiana. The story of Kryygi is summarised by Katrin Koel-Abt and Andreas Winkelmann in their historical and medical-anthropological examination as follows: when settlers attacked and killed a group of Aché in the forest of southern Paraguay in 1897, they took along a three-to four-year-old girl who was left behind and named her Damiana. She died in 1907 at the age of 14 of tuberculosis. Her remains were subsequently kept in the Museo de La Plata in Argentina, where her skeleton

2 We would like to thank the collection coordinator at the university in Bonn, Alma Hannig, for the exchange on this case.

body was preserved. Her head ‘including the brain, skullcap and scalp with hair, was sent to Hans Virchow in Berlin in January 1908’ (Koel-Abt and Winkelmann 2013, 399), and in 1911 it was included in the skull collection of the anatomical institute of the Charité.

In 2010 the postcranial skeleton was returned to the Aché community in Paraguay by the Museo de La Plata. Following a subsequent inquiry from a journalist, Koel-Abt and Winkelmann were made aware of the possibility that further remains of the Aché girl were held in the anthropological collection of the Charité. Their research confirmed this, and ‘a macerated skull (complete with mandible), a dried scalp with hair, and a formalin-fixed specimen of the tongue and adjacent glands’ (ibid., 394) were passed to the Paraguayan ambassador in Berlin, in presence of the Argentinian ambassador. Those involved in negotiations regarding the return were officials from Paraguay and Argentina, alongside representatives of the Aché community, the German Foreign Office, and the Berlin Cultural Affairs Department.

Ecuador

Ethnologische
Sammlung
Universität
Göttingen

In 1976, Jorge Karakas Ipiák, representing the Shuar people living in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon, approached Erhard Schlesier, professor of ethnology at the University of Göttingen, with a request for the return of two tsantsas, so-called shrunken heads, which were to be displayed in an exhibition on the cultural heritage of Ecuador and the Shuar.³ Ipiák was willing to exchange them for tsantsas of sloths (Müller 2021b; Winkelmann 2020a, 42). When Erhard Schlesier responded evasively to this request, a group of students who called themselves the Magisches Einsatzkommando der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde stole two tsantsas from a showcase and, according to the Einsatzkommando, returned them in 1978.

One of the tsantsas had come to Göttingen via an ethnographic collection from Łódź (Poland) that the Nazis had seized in 1939 (ibid.). Except for the missing tsantsa, this collection was returned to Łódź in 2016 (Herrmann 2018). The second tsantsa was previously owned by a private individual and had been acquired by the institute in 1957. Whether the two tsantsas arrived in Ecuador and were ever shown in the above-mentioned exhibition is not known to us.

United States of America

Karl May Museum
Radebeul

In March 2014 Cecil Pavlat Sr., a cultural repatriation specialist of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, requested the repatriation of a human scalp from the Karl May Museum in Radebeul in Saxony (Leipold 2017, 199). Robin Leipold, manager of the collection at the museum at the time, has summarised the initial exchange concerning this case (ibid.).

3 A detailed description of the case can be found in Müller (2021b).

The museum is dedicated to the local Saxonian writer Karl May (1842–1912). It opened in 1928 and holds, besides May's private belongings, an ethnographic collection with both human remains and sacred objects primarily from North America. These objects were collected by Karl May himself, his wife Klara, and a performance artist known under the name Patty Frank (ibid., 196–197). The human scalp claimed in 2014 had been acquired by Frank for \$100 and three bottles of alcohol, according to a museum publication from 1929 (ibid., 199). Frank's collection comprises several human scalps, on which provenance research is incomplete (ibid., 198). The scalps had been on display in the museum, until the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians was informed about this by a US-American journalist, who had visited the museum (ibid.). The scalp was handed over by the Karl-May-Stiftung on 12 June 2021 to representatives of the US-American government, which act as safe keeper in the name of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (Freistaat Sachsen 12 June 2021).⁴

Hawai'i (USA)

Museum für
Völkerkunde
SKD
Dresden

This case has been accounted for by Edward Halealoha Ayau (2020; with Keeler 2017), former executive director of Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei.⁵ In December 1990, the museum in Dresden received the first inquiry from Hawai'i regarding human remains from the islands (Schlott 2018, 135). After this first request by the State of Hawai'i Historic Preservation Officer, William Paty, the head of the department of anthropology at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Dresden⁶ responded on 27 March 1991, that the museum collection contained two calvariae, a cranium and a mandible from Hawai'i (Ayau 2020, 73). On 16 April 1991 Edward Kanahale, also of Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei, requested the return of the human remains for reburial (ibid.). In 1992 the director of the museum, Heinz Israel, responded that the remains had come to Dresden between 1896 and 1904 and had been state property ever since (ibid., 74). This rejection based on a legal argument was repeated by the German embassy in Washington in 1993 (ibid., 73–76). In January 2015, a request was again sent to the museum in Dresden, following the 2013 publication *Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections* by the German Museums Association.

Although the legal situation in Saxony did not initially permit the return of human remains, the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD) has found a way to repatriate. It refers to article 1 of the German constitution, according to which every human being is entitled to inviolable digni-

4 We would like to thank Robin Leipold for this reference.

5 Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei (Group caring for the ancestors of Hawai'i) was a native Hawaiian organization founded to attend to burial issues (Ayau 2020, 63).

6 The Dresden Museum für Völkerkunde is part of the Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen (SES) which is a merger of the ethnological museums in Dresden, Leipzig and Herrnhut.

ty, which does not expire even after death. Human dignity also includes a right to a dignified burial and the protection of peace in death.⁷ Through the act of rehumanisation, which is performed in a solemn setting in the museum, objects become human remains again and are entitled to a dignified burial in their respective home country.⁸ As a consequence, by June 2017 the Free State of Saxony agreed to hand over the human remains of Hawaiian individuals from Dresden, Leipzig and Herrnhut. The ceremonial preparation for the return journey of the *iwi kūpuna* (ancestral remains) took place on 22 October 2017, after which they were reburied (Ayau 2020, 75/76).

New Zealand

In 2003, the New Zealand government established the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (KARP) at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which is mandated with negotiating and conducting repatriations of human remains on behalf of Māori and Moriori communities, involving *kōiwi tangata* (Māori human remains), *kōimi tangata* (Moriori human remains) and *Toi moko* (tattooed and preserved heads of deceased Māoris) (Herewini 2017). After successful negotiations with the institutions holding the human remains, these are initially transferred temporarily to Te Papa, where they are not inventoried but preserved to research their specific provenance before they are eventually transferred to the respective communities (Te Papa 2011, 10).

In a letter to Carolina Romahn, then head of the Cultural Office in Frankfurt am Main, Eva Raabe, then custodian of the Oceania collection of the city's Weltkulturen Museum, explains *Toi moko* and the historical circumstances: originally, the preparation of *Toi moko* was only performed on high-ranking Māori personalities, both men and women. In war, the heads of killed enemies were also prepared in this way and put on display. The *Toi moko* were attributed a sacred character – their surrender to European collectors happened most often involuntarily. During the Land Wars (1845–1872) this practice changed when some Māori started to trade *Toi moko* for rifles. Generally, trading was not done with *Toi moko* of one's group but in some cases skulls of slaves were traded, which often makes it difficult to reconstruct the specific community of origin (Raabe 4 March 2009, see also Krüger 2013, 245 ff.).⁹

The first case of returning a *Toi moko* to New Zealand from Germany took place in 1991 from the Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde¹⁰ (Fründt and Förster 2018, 548; Winkelmann 2020a, 41). This case has not been researched further, so the following paragraph is based on perso-

Hamburgisches
Museum für
Völkerkunde
Hamburg

7 OVG Nordrhein-Westfalen, judgment of 29 April 2008 – 19 A 3665/06, line 30.
8 Telephone conversation with Birgit Scheps-Bretschneider on 10 January 2022. We would like to thank her for the exchange on this case.
9 We would like to thank Eva Raabe for the information provided.
10 Since 2018 the museum is called Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK).

nal communication with the former museum employee Clara Wilpert and Amber Aranui, a repatriation researcher at Te Papa.¹¹

The repatriation was preceded by the Taonga Māori conference in New Zealand in 1990, in which the handling of Māori collections, as well as the topic of repatriation, were discussed – among others by Clara Wilpert, then head of the Pacific department in Hamburg (Gathercole and Ildiens 1991).

In October 1991, Alan Baker, director of the National Museum¹² informed Wilpert that he was to be in Europe shortly to negotiate the return of several Toi moko. He referred back to the Taonga Māori conference during which she had indicated to him that initiatives to repatriate Māori human remains would be received favourably at her institution.¹³ Clara Wilpert negotiated the case with Volker Plagemann, senate director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Hamburg at the time, who gave his consent for a return of the Toi moko as a permanent loan. It was decided to conduct the transaction privately, as there was no legal precedent for such an agreement.¹⁴ Presumably, the handover itself took place in Hamburg between 9 and 11 November.¹⁵

In 2006 two Toi moko were returned to Te Papa¹⁶. This was initiated by the head of the department for Oceania at the Übersee-Museum Bremen, Dieter Heintze, and was not based on a request from New Zealand (Fründt and Förster 2018, 548; Winkelmann 2020a, 41).¹⁷ In an interview with Sarah Fründt, Heintze explains his motivation for initiating the return with both ethical reasons based on the problematic acquisition of the Toi moko and personal respect for Māoris with whom he had been in contact (Fründt 2011, 131). Heintze's proposal for the return was approved by the board of trustees of the museum in Bremen, and subsequently by the federal state government of the city, after which the return was organised and executed by Heintze himself (ibid.).

In 2017 the repatriation of human remains of 44 individuals of the Māori and Moriori people was honoured with a ceremony in Bremen. Unlike the repatriations of previous years, the press was allowed to join the proceedings and reported on the ceremony and the prayers of the Māori. The repatriation request had been received by the museum's director Wiebke Ahrndt in 2013, again as part of the Karanga Aotearoa project. The Senate of the City of Bremen approved the repatriation in 2016 (Joswig 22 May 2017). Most of the bones, besides from the Toi mokos, had been collected in 1897 by Hugo Schauinsland, the founder of the

11 We would like to thank Clara Wilpert and Amber Aranui for the provided information.

12 The National Museum was a predecessor institution of today's Te Papa.

13 Email from Amber Aranui to Sarah Fründt and Zoe Schoofs on 21 October 2021.

14 Email from Clara Wilpert to Zoe Schoofs on 17 October 2021.

15 Email from Amber Aranui to Sarah Fründt and Zoe Schoofs on 21 October 2021.

16 <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/international-repatriation> [accessed 9 October 2021].

17 Along with Clara Wilpert, Dieter Heintze also participated in the Taonga Māori conference in 1990 (Gathercole and Ildiens 1991).

Museum für
Völkerkunde
SKD
Dresden

Weltkulturen
Museum
Frankfurt am Main

Senckenberg
Naturmuseum
Frankfurt am Main

museum in Bremen, who excavated them on the Chatham Islands and took them with him to Germany (Fründt 2011, 62).

In 2010 the repatriation team of Te Papa first requested the return of human remains of Māori and Moriori by the Saxon State Ministry for Science and the Arts. The request was supported by the Embassy of New Zealand. The team received a list itemising 57 inventory numbers for human remains from New Zealand in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Dresden – including ten hair samples, 15 skeletons, and 25 skulls. According to Christine Schlott (2018), the request was rejected with the argument that the human remains had been legally acquired. Furthermore, those responsible argued, the human remains were the property of Saxony and, therefore, a return could not be considered based on the current legal situation (*ibid.*, 136). About ten years later a return was nevertheless decided based on the concept of dehumanisation (see above). SKD planned its first return of Māori and Moriori human remains to New Zealand for 2020. Due to the pandemic, the ceremony and handover were postponed to 2022 (Ackermann 2020, 5; Scheps-Bretschneider 2021, 65).

These cases have not been researched further so the following paragraphs are based on our private correspondence with Eva Raabe (see above) and Friedemann Schrenk, head of the section for paleoanthropology and quaternary palaeontology, at the Senckenberg Research Institute in Frankfurt, to which the Senckenberg Museum is also affiliated.¹⁸ Representatives of Te Papa approached Senckenberg Naturmuseum and Museum der Weltkulturen¹⁹ in 2008/2009 concerning the return of one Toi moko from each museum (Fründt and Förster 2018, 548). From the beginning, both museums responded positively to the requested return. Regarding the Museum der Weltkulturen, Te Herekiele Herewini, Repatriation Manager of KARP, contacted Christine Stelzig, acting director of the museum, in 2008 (Herewini 2008). The Toi moko in question had come into the collection of the Städtisches Völkermuseum²⁰ in 1928/29²¹ after it had been purchased from the curio dealer Umlauff (Raabe 4 March 2009). The Weltkulturen Museum had not researched the Toi moko at the time of return and therefore could not give any more information about its provenance. It is not known to what extent research on the skull was later conducted in New Zealand.²² Regarding the Senckenberg Museum, it is likely that the Toi moko in its collection had been purchased between 1936 and 1938 by Gustav Heinrich Ralph von Koenigswald in Southeast Asia (Te Papa 2011, 4/5).²³

Since both museums are located in Frankfurt am Main, and a return request was received around the same time, the responsible per-

18 We would like to thank Eva Raabe and Friedemann Schrenk for this information.

19 Today, it is called the Weltkulturen Museum.

20 Until 1946 the Weltkulturen Museum was called Städtisches Völkermuseum.

21 Te Papa Museum claims the 1930s as the date of accession (Te Papa 2011, 5).

22 Telephone conversation with Eva Raabe on 6 October 2021.

23 Koenigswald also collected the remains for a *Homo erectus*, which were returned in 1975 (see below).

sons from the two museums, in consultation with Herewini, decided to conduct the return in one ceremony. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) and Māori representatives requested that the press should not be informed of the planned return, nor of the specific ceremony, to preserve the piety of the deceased (Fründt and Förster 2018, 548). Raabe wrote a report to the city's cultural office, which had to approve the return, regarding the Toi moko kept by her institution (4 March 2009), in which she expressed her support for the repatriation as well as her approval of a return without members of the press present (ibid.).

The repatriation ceremony took place on 3 May 2011 and was organised by Weltkulturen Museum as a funeral ceremony following Māori tradition. Representatives of the museums and the cultural department, the Ambassador of New Zealand, Michelle Hippolite (leader of the delegation), Te Kanawa Pitiroi (kaumātua, elder), Kataraina Pitiroi (kaumātua, elder), Te Herekikie Herewini and Peter Borgmann (researcher) participated in the ceremony (Herewini and Raabe 2011).

In the course of Te Papa's repatriation efforts in Frankfurt, the Museum Wiesbaden, which also holds a Toi moko, was approached as well. The repatriation process was interrupted by the Karanga Aotearoa program due to formal and organisational issues. Museum Wiesbaden has indicated its willingness to resume the process.²⁴

The Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum – Kulturen der Welt in Cologne repatriated a Toi moko in 2018. There had been corresponding contacts with New Zealand since 2012/2013 when Klaus Schneider, former director of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, and Peter Mesenhöller, head of museum studies at the museum, had visited in preparation for the exhibition *Made in Oceania*. Then, they had already met with KARP and initiated talks about a return (Fründt and Lueb 20 November 2018). Oliver Lueb, deputy director and head of the Oceania department of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, continued this process in 2017 when he contacted KARP and subsequently officially offered to return the Toi moko (Fründt and Förster 2018, 548; Winkelmann 2020a, 41). In this case, the repatriation thus was initiated by the German museum itself. Following a decision by the city council of Cologne, which the museum needed as a municipal institution, the Toi moko was returned in 2018.²⁵

The Toi moko had been purchased by the former director of the museum, Willy Foy, in the early 20th century²⁶ from William Oldman, a British trader. The Toi moko had been on display in the permanent exhibition of the museum since the 1970s but was removed in the 1980s when indigenous voices became loud and demanded a change in the handling of human remains (Fründt and Lueb 20 November 2018).

Museum
Wiesbaden

Rautenstrauch-
Joest-Museum
Cologne

24 We thank Andy Reymann, Museum Wiesbaden, and Sibylle Discher, scientific advisor at the Hessian Ministry of Higher Education, Research and the Arts for the exchange on this case.

25 <https://www.museenkoeln.de/rautenstrauch-joest-museum/Repatriierung-toi-moko> [accessed 9 October 2021].

26 At that time the museum was called Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde.

In 2019, the Charité in Berlin returned the human remains of 109 Māori and Moriori individuals following a repatriation request in 2010. The bones were taken from graves and brought to Berlin at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century, and their provenance have been researched in the Charité-led project *Provenienzforschung an einer Sammlung menschlicher Überreste aus Neuseeland* (Charité 29 April 2019; AG Koloniale Provenienzen des Arbeitskreises Provenienzforschung e. V. 2021). Despite the great number of human remains returned, it has not been possible to find further information on the provenance of these Toi mokos. Emissaries of the indigenous communities, representatives of the Te Papa and the Charité as well as New Zealand Ambassador Rupert Holborow participated in the repatriation ceremony.

In 2020 the University of Göttingen returned two Toi moko to New Zealand. Michael Kraus, the custodian of the Ethnologische Sammlung, explained the history of the collection and the Toi moko as follows:²⁷ in 1834 the skulls had come to the Akademisches Museum, which was a part of the university and hosted collections from a wide range of disciplines. Over time an ethnographic collection took shape. In 1878, under the name Ethnologische Sammlung, it became part of the Naturhistorisches Museum which was founded as part of the university in the same year.²⁸ Originally three Toi moko were in the possession of the museum: one disappeared in 1942 and is now believed to be in private possession. This skull was never officially inventoried by the museum (Krüger 2013, 245; 252/253). Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, anatomist and anthropologist at the university, had originally acquired the other two Toi moko in 1834 from the British royal family through Heinrich Ludwig Goertz, who worked in Windsor Castle (ibid., 250 ff.; Georg-August-Universität 16 October 2020).

In 2019 Paul Spoonley, pro-vice-chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Massey University in New Zealand, in agreement with Michael Kraus forwarded the information about the two Toi moko to Te Papa. Subsequently, Herewini contacted the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Göttingen.²⁹ On 26 November 2019, the presidential board of the University of Göttingen decided to return the two Toi moko. The return ceremony took place on 15 October 2020 – due to pandemic circumstances, it was held later than originally planned. The number of guests was also reduced. Participants were: Te Arikirangi Mamaku (coordinator of the repatriation programme), Hinemoana Baker, Rupert Holborow (Ambassador of New Zealand) and Hiltraud Casper-Hehne, vice president of the University of Göttingen.³⁰

In 2020 the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin, part of Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK), repatriated two Toi moko to New Zealand. One had been acquired in 1879 in London by Fedor Jagor, a Ger-

27 We would like to thank Michael Kraus for the exchange on this case.

28 Email from Michael Kraus to Zoe Schoofs on 13 October 2021.

29 Email from Michael Kraus to Zoe Schoofs on 13 October 2021.

30 <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/stellungnahmen+%e2%80%93+transparenz/617641.html#beispiel7> [accessed 15 October 2021].

man ethnographer. The other was donated to the museum in 1905 by Hermann Meyer, a publisher and geographer. Neither Fedor Jagor nor Hermann Meyer had brought the skulls to Europe themselves.³¹

The return ceremony in October 2020 was conducted by Te Arikirangi Mamaku, the coordinator of the repatriation programme of Te Papa. The Ambassador of New Zealand, Rupert Holborow, Lars-Christian Koch, director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin collections in the Humboldt Forum, Monika Grütters, Minister of State for Culture and the Media,³² and Hermann Parzinger, president of the SPK, were also present.³³

Australia

In 2008 the Australian embassy in Germany sent a letter to all European museums, asking for repatriation of the ancestors of Aborigines (Schlott 2018, 136). It was the beginning of a long line of discussions, research and – finally – returns. Since 2011 Australia has had a repatriation policy in place, devised to help support indigenous citizens who seek the return of their ancestors.³⁴

In 1997 the Australian embassy contacted the Institut für Humangenetik und Anthropologie in Freiburg. The request remained unanswered. According to Britta Lange and Julia Voss, the embassy contacted two more institutions without any success. Unfortunately, there is no more information available in this case (Lange and Voss 3 March 2007; Möller 2015, 9).

In 2013 the Charité repatriated the skulls and skeleton parts of 33 individuals (Winkelmann 2020a, 41; Winkelmann 2020b, 477 ff.). The institution had already signed an agreement to return these in 2008.³⁵ The human remains had come to Germany between 1872 and 1911, 16 of them not directly to the collection of the Charité but to Felix von Luschan who founded the so-called *S-Sammlung* (*S-Collection*) at the Berliner Museum für Völkerkunde.³⁶ Several human remains were brought to Germany by Wilhelm Krause, an anatomist who worked at the Anatomical Institute in Berlin. In 1897 he went on a scientific research trip to Australia.

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- 31 <https://www.smb.museum/nachrichten/detail/toi-moko-aus-dem-ethnologischen-museum-kehren-nach-neuseeland-zurueck/> [accessed 15 October 2021].
- 32 SPK is financed by the federal government and the 16 federal states, therefore, Grütters participated as a government representative.
- 33 <https://www.smb.museum/nachrichten/detail/toi-moko-aus-dem-ethnologischen-museum-kehren-nach-neuseeland-zurueck/> [accessed 15 October 2021].
- 34 <https://www.arts.gov.au/what-we-do/cultural-heritage/indigenous-repatriation> [accessed 4 November 2021].
- 35 According to its own information, the Charité was the first scientific institution in Germany to sign an agreement with Australia in November 2008 (Charité 26 April 2013).
- 36 The collection includes human remains from all over the world. In 2011 the collection was incorporated into the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte itself part of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (<http://www.universitaetssammlungen.de/sammlung/1396> [accessed 01 February 2022]).

Institut für
Humangenetik und
Anthropologie
Universität
Freiburg

Charité –
Universitäts-
medizin Berlin

The remains became part of the university's anthropological collection but the skulls were later included in a separate racial skull collection, the so-called *Rassenschädelsammlung* (*Racial skull collection*) (Winkelmann 2020b, 471 ff.).³⁷

The research concerning human remains from Australia was part of Charité's Human Remains Project (Fründt and Förster 2018, 539), a three-year research project (2010–2013) that investigated the acquisition contexts and the history of the Charité collection of Namibia, Paraguay and Australia.³⁸

In 2014 the Charité repatriated another 14 Australian skulls. 13 had come to Germany through Otto Finsch in 1881. He had acquired them on the island Mabuyag (Torres Strait) during a research trip and sent them to Rudolf Virchow, professor of pathology at the Charité. After Virchow's death, the skulls became part of the *S-Collection*. One skull was collected in the region of Murchison River (western Australia), probably from an engineer called Victor Streich in 1891/1892. Wilhelm Krause brought it to Germany in 1897 (Winkelmann 2020b, 474; 478).³⁹ Representatives of the Goemulgal (people of Lag Mabuyag) and the Wajarri Yamatji community participated in the repatriation ceremony to take their ancestors home (Charité 14 July 2014).

Only a few days later, on 25 July 2014, the Charité returned the skull of a woman to Tessa Atto and Nunami Sculthorpe-Green, representatives of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) (Fründt and Förster 2018, 546). Detailed provenance research has been published by Andreas Winkelmann and Barbara Teßmann (2018). The woman, according to an inscription on the skull was called 'Nanny', a 'native of Kangaroo Island'. She was about 15 years old when she died, probably of the consequences of an ear infection, in northern Tasmania (Winkelmann and Teßmann 2018, 42). According to another inscription on the skull, it came to Berlin through Adolphus Schayer, a German sheep farmer who worked for the Van Diemen's Land Company. Schayer probably handed it over to Johannes Müller, director of the Königlich Anatomisches Museum in Berlin,⁴⁰ in 1843 (ibid., 43). The actual circumstances of the acquisition cannot be reconstructed.

The identification of the woman remained ambiguous. TAC has identified her as Nungarikka from the Robbins Island tribe (TAC 2014) who inhabited Robbins Island and the adjacent Kangaroo Island, two islands off the coast of northwest Tasmania. Nungarikka seems to have been mentioned in the journal of colonial officer George Augustus Robinson (ibid., 1; Winkelmann and Teßmann 2018, 45). Robinson was

37 In late 2011, the *S-Collection*, together with most pieces of the *Rassenschädelsammlung* was transferred to the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin under the name *Luschan-Sammlung*, where it has been housed ever since.

38 For more information on the project see: https://anatomie.charite.de/ueber_den_faecherverbund/human_remains_projekt/ [accessed 15 October 2021].

39 https://anatomie.charite.de/ueber_den_faecherverbund/human_remains_projekt/restitution_australischer_gebeine_2014/ [accessed 15 October 2021].

40 <http://www.universitaetssammlungen.de/sammlung/48/pp> [accessed 12 Dezember 2021].

Charité –
Universitäts-
medizin Berlin

Berliner
Gesellschaft für
Anthropologie,
Ethnologie und
Urgeschichte
Berlin

Senckenberg
Naturmuseum
Frankfurt am Main

‘rounding up the northwestern tribespeople to remove them from the region to allow the Van Diemen’s Land Company to occupy the land they had chosen to farm’ (TAC 2014, 1). On the other hand, Winkelmann and Teßmann argue that the inscription ‘Nanny’ on the frontal bone of the skull could as well refer to Nanny Allan, who had been born on another Kangaroo Island located southwest of Adelaide and who was a daughter of English sealer James Allan and a Tasmanian woman (Winkelmann and Teßmann 2018, 41; 44).

In 2017 the Charité, the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (BGAEU) and the Senckenberg Naturmuseum in Frankfurt returned the human remains of three individuals (Fründt and Förster 2018, 545; Winkelmann 2020a, 41). The repatriation ceremony, in which descendants, community members, and representatives from Aboriginal Land Councils participated as well as David Doble and Amanda Morley, officials of the Australian Department of Communications and the Arts, took place in the Australian embassy on 23 March 2017 in Berlin and was led by Lynette Wood (The Australian Government 24 March 2017; Schrenk et al. 2018, 51).

BGAEU returned the mummy of Ng:tja, also known as Barry Clarke. Clarke had been an elder of the Ngadjon-Jii people of Malanda, a town situated in the Atherton Tablelands in far north Queensland. Clarke had died in 1903, his body had been mummified subsequently. The mummy had been brought into the collection in 1905 by Hermann Klaatsch, a German physician, who travelled Australia from 1904 to 1907. In the travel report Klaatsch sent together with the mummy to the BGAEU, he reports about the human remains of 47 individuals and several fossils he had collected so far. According to Klaatsch, he exchanged the mummy for clothes, food, and tobacco in Cairns Region. When the relatives demanded the mummy back the next day Klaatsch did not respond to this request (Klaatsch 14 July 1905, 772 ff.; Teßmann et al. 2020, 119). In 1914 the mummy had become a permanent loan to the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde⁴¹ in Berlin, where it remained until the repatriation to the descendants of Ng:tja, Vera Ketchell and Richard Hoolihan, more than hundred years later. BGAEU also returned the breastplate he used to wear (Fründt and Förster 2018, 546, Kuper 27 March 2017, 1). A detailed research report has been published by BGAEU (Teßmann et al. 2020, 119 ff.; Kuper 27 March 2017, 1).

Senckenberg Naturmuseum repatriated one skull that was most likely taken from the Upper Clarence region around 1861 by Wilhelm Kirchner, a German immigration agent. Robyne Bancroft, founder of the Indigenous Archaeological Association (IAA), and Michael Randall participated in the repatriation ceremony on behalf of the Clarence River region. The skull is kept in the Australian Museum in Sydney until further research can confirm the region of origin (Kuper 27 March 2017, 2).

41 The Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde is today called Ethnologisches Museum.

In the same ceremony, Charité repatriated one skull from Queensland, which was also part of Wilhelm Krause's Australian collection. The skull is that of a person in his or her twenties who was probably buried before being collected. Krause got this skull from St. Andrew William Logan McDowall, a medical student in Sydney whose father worked as a land surveyor in Queensland. Most likely McDowall or his father acquired the skull there themselves. The skull was handed over to the Queensland Museum and will be returned to the Butchulla People in the near future (Winkelmann 2020b, 480/81).

Landesmuseum
Hannover

In October 2017 the Landesmuseum Hannover repatriated the skeleton of a young woman – without the skull, which had gone missing. The human remains had been brought to Hanover in 1909 after the dead body, including the coffin, had been stolen in Queensland (Altwig 18 September 2016; Fründt and Förster 2018, 545).

A representative from the Lama Lama family group, Lower Saxony State Government officials, the Australian Ambassador Lynette Wood and a representative from the Australian Department of Communications and the Arts participated in the repatriation ceremony.⁴²

Museum Fünf
Kontinente
Munich

On 9 April 2019, the Museum Fünf Kontinente repatriated the mummified body of an ancestral king to the Gimuy Walubara Yidindji people in Far North Queensland. The repatriation followed a request by the Australian embassy in 2011 to the Bavarian Ministry of Science and the Arts, which claimed all Australian human remains kept in Bavarian collections. After the request, the museum began provenance research. Michaela Appel, curator of the museum's collection for Southern Asia, Southeast Asia and Australia, Gudju Gudju Fourmile, a descendant of the ancestral king, and Paul Turnbull, a cultural historian at the University of Tasmania wrote a detailed report about this provenance research (2018/2019). The human remains had been taken from a ceremonial site where death ceremonies were carried out by Leopold Ferdinand Sachs⁴³ in 1876.

After being displayed in two exhibitions⁴⁴ the mummified body was purchased by Max Buchner, director of the Königliche Ethnographische Sammlung⁴⁵ in Munich in 1888/1889 (Appel et al. 2018/2019, 223). A delegation of five Gimuy Walubara Yidindji Elders (Gudju Gudju Fourmile, Henrick Fourmile, Gerald Fourmile, Peter Hyde and Neville Reys) participated in the repatriation ceremony along with Bernd Sibling, the Bavarian State Minister of Science and the Arts and Lynette Wood (ibid., 221).

Linden-Museum
Stuttgart

The second ceremony held for repatriation to Australia in 2019 took place on 12 April in Stuttgart. State Secretary Petra Olschowski handed

Alexander-Ecker-
Sammlung
Universitätsarchiv
Freiburg

42 <https://www.arts.gov.au/departmental-news/port-stewart-ancestor-returned-home> [accessed 10 Dezember 2021].

43 Leopold Ferdinand Sachs was a manager of the Townsville branch of the Australian Joint Stock bank. He 'had diverse business interests including buying and selling land for housing, cattle farming and owning shares in various mining ventures' (Appel et al. 2018, 223). The venture through which the body was collected was financed and led by Sachs (ibid.).

44 Sydney International Exhibition and Melbourne International Exhibition (Appel et al. 2018, 226–229).

45 Predecessor of the Museum Fünf Kontinente.

over the human remains of ten individuals to the Australian Ambassador Lynette Wood and a delegation of the Australian government. Two skulls had been held by the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, and eight skulls had been kept in the Alexander-Ecker-Sammlung of the University of Freiburg (Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst Baden-Württemberg 12 April 2019). Already in 2007, the Australian government had requested the return of these human remains, but the Baden-Württemberg government decided to perform mtDNA analysis first, to confirm their origin (Süddeutsche Zeitung 11 March 2019). Another repatriation request from the Australian embassy was received by the Ministry in March 2018.

The history of the skulls in the Linden-Museum is as follows: in 1905 Ernst von Sieglin, a German entrepreneur had given a skull which he had probably purchased from Johann Gustav Friedrich Umlauff, a curio dealer in Hamburg, to the Linden-Museum as a present.⁴⁶ The second skull came to the collection through an exchange. Unfortunately, there is no more information available about the origin of the skulls (Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst Baden-Württemberg 12 April 2019).

The eight skulls formerly kept by the Alexander-Ecker-Sammlung have been researched as part of the project *Test of provenance of probable Australian Aboriginal skulls in the Alexander Ecker Collection, Freiburg and the Linden-Museum Stuttgart*. In this project, it was determined – through (the above-mentioned) mtDNA analysis – that the skulls most likely are from Australia.⁴⁷ Notes that Ecker left suggest that the bones originated from different regions.⁴⁸ The Australian government plans to conduct further provenance research and to return them to their communities of origin (Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst Baden-Württemberg 12 April 2019).

Alexander Ecker was the founder of this collection with skulls from all over the world which he most likely acquired through personal contacts with former pupils and other collectors (ibid.). In her speech at the repatriation ceremony, Olschowski declared that institutions in Baden-Württemberg would conduct further research on their collections to enable future repatriations (ibid).

After receiving the letter from the Australian embassy in 2008, the Dresdner Museum für Völkerkunde provided the embassy with an inventory list of 80 human remains (42 hair samples, 20 skulls, 16 skeletons, and two bones). In 2011, the Australian embassy officially requested the human remains in the Saxon State Ministry for Science and the Arts (Schlott 2018, 136). The application was initially rejected by the Ministry

Museum für
Völkerkunde
SKD
Dresden

46 Umlauff also sold a Toi moko to the Städtisches Völkermuseum in Frankfurt in 1928/29, see above.

47 Email from Ursula Wittwer-Backofen, professor for and director of Biological Anthropology at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Freiburg to Zoe Schoofs on 21 Dezember 2021. We would like to thank Ursula Wittwer-Backofen for the provided information.

48 Email from Ursula Wittwer-Backofen to Zoe Schoofs on 24 January 2021.

given the legal situation in Saxony employing the same argumentation with which the 2010 request from New Zealand was denied (see above).

In 2017, representatives of the Australian embassy, the Australian Ministry for Communications and the Arts, the Saxon State Ministry for Science and the Arts and the general director of the SKD, Marion Ackermann, started to talk about return options (SKD 2019, 64/65). Again, repatriation is based on the concept of rehumanisation (see above).

On 15 April 2019, the SKD repatriated the human remains of 37 individuals of the Yawuru, Karajarri and Djugun people. The ceremony took place in the Australian embassy in Berlin, again in the presence of a delegation of representatives of various indigenous communities, Lynette Wood, Eva-Maria Stange, the Saxon Minister of Science and representatives of the SKD (ibid.). A second return was conducted on 28 November 2019 with individuals of the Menang, Gunaikurnai, and Ngarrindjeri people. A third repatriation was planned for July 2020 but had to be moved to the year 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Scheps-Bretschneider 2021).⁴⁹

For some parts of the collection, a particularly violent colonial context could be established: several individuals had been forced to dive for pearl shells at the Kimberly coast where they were beaten and tortured, and some of them drowned. After death, their bones were sold to Dresden, Leipzig and Herrnhut (Gwarinman Project 2019, 3; 20 ff.). In all of these cases, the human remains originate from grave robbery or violent confrontation and had come into the possession of the Königliches Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnographisches Museum⁵⁰ between 1880 and 1902.

During the ceremony in April 2019 human remains from the Meckelsche Sammlungen at the University of Halle-Wittenberg were also returned (Winkelmann 2020a, 41). Representatives of the university, i.e. Heike Kielstein, director of the Institute of Anatomy and Cell Biology (IAZ), and Bernd Fischer, chairman of the sponsoring association of the Meckelsche Sammlungen and former director of the IAZ, as well as Uwe Paul, head of the Department of University Medicine in the Ministry of Science of the State of Saxony-Anhalt, participated in the ceremony (Fuhrmann 2019). The preparatory work for the return had started in April 2011, when the Australian embassy had asked the Ministry of Education and the Arts of Saxony-Anhalt for help concerning the repatriation of human remains. Two months later, Rüdiger Schultka, former scientific director of the Meckelsche Sammlungen, confirmed the presence of human remains of five indigenous Australians. One year later the repatriation was decided by the chancellor of the university in Halle, Martin Hecht. Finally, the return was realised in 2019.

Meckelsche
Sammlungen
Universität
Halle

49 SKD is also conducting research on the repatriation of human remains to Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Japan, Labrador, Greenland, Finland, United States of America and Canada (Scheps-Bretschneider 2021, 64/65).

50 Predecessor of the Museum für Völkerkunde, which was founded in 1945 (SKD 2019, 64).

Ethnologisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

In 2020, SPK decided to repatriate the human remains of three individuals: two infant mummies and bones in a bark coffin. SPK received the official repatriation request from the Australian government in 2020 (SPK 11 September 2020). Both the mummies and the coffin have been in the museum's inventory since 1880. The human remains in the bark coffin had been collected from their place of burial in Queensland, and subsequently given to the museum by H. Kortüm. The mummies had come into the collection of the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde through the missionary James Chalmers (*ibid.*) Hermann Parzinger is planning to discuss the details of the return with the Australian Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (*ibid.*).

Japan

Berliner
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Anthropologie,
Ethnologie und
Urgeschichte
Berlin

On 31 July 2017, the skull of an Ainu individual was returned at the Japanese embassy in Berlin to the chairman of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido, Tadashi Kato. The skull had been removed 138 years prior from an unknown Ainu grave near Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido by the German Georg Schlesinger, who brought it to the Berliner Anthropologische Gesellschaft⁵¹ where it was kept in the Rudolf Virchow collection. The return was made possible due to the research of Japanese journalist Keisuke Nakanishi, who established the whereabouts of human remains from Ainu individuals in German collections. The erection of a new museum is planned in the city Shira-Oi on Hokkaido, where the skull will be kept together with other Ainu human remains from Japanese university collections. The provenance of the skull is to be further researched in Japan (Witting 31 July 2017).⁵²

Tanzania

Museum für
Vor- und
Frühgeschichte
SPK
Berlin

In 2016 a grandson of Mangi Meli, Isaria Meli, contacted SPK in his search for the skull of his grandfather without any result: a DNA analysis of six skulls from the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte did not determine any matches. Mangi Meli (1866–1900) had been the Chief of the Chagga in the region of Kilimanjaro who was executed by German colonial troops (SPK 20 September 2019).⁵³

In 1898 the resistance fighter Mutwa Mkwawa, countering the colonial rule in Uhehe (in what was then known as German East Africa) shot himself, whereupon German soldiers took possession of his head (Brockmeyer 2017, 47). We recap the rather early repatriation (see Müller

51 Today Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (BGAEU).

52 For visual recordings of the return: <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/7d3fae63f4bcca7e273a2632c0b261b9> [accessed 12 October 2021].

53 Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, coming from the same village as Meli, has been looking for the head of the chief since he came to Germany in 1977 (von Cranach 5 February 2020).

2021a, 30) of the skull of Mkwawa from the Übersee-Museum in Bremen, to contextualise the much later return of a tooth claimed to also have been Mkwawa's.

It is not clear how – or if – the skull was subsequently brought to Germany after the decapitation. However, upon being shown a collection of skulls at the Völkerkunde Museum in Bremen⁵⁴ in 1953 the British governor Edward Twining claimed that one of the skulls must be that of Mkwawa due to a bullet hole (among other indications) (*ibid.*, 51). A handover of the skull from the German to the British government had been written into the *Versailles Treaty*, but only in 1954 did Twining bring the skull from Bremen back to Uhehe where Chief Adam Sapi, the great-grandson of Mkwawa, received it after consultation with his employees. Sapi signed a declaration from Twining about the authenticity of the skull (*ibid.*, 62). Since then, the skull has been kept in a glass box in a small museum (or mausoleum) in Kalenga, from where Mkwawa had governed (*ibid.*, 64).

There has been published much on the skull of Mkwawa and several media reports have been broadcasted on the subject,⁵⁵ however, recently researchers have argued that the skull returned in 1954 could not have been the remains of Mkwawa (Brockmeyer et al. 2020, 118).

Different from the trajectory of the skull itself provenance of a tooth taken from the skull of Mkwawa can be reconstructed (Brockmeyer 2017, 47; see also Brockmeyer 2021). After being removed from the original skull, the tooth had been an heirloom in the family of the colonial officer Tom Prince, from where it was restituted in 2014 to Chief Adam Abdul Sapi, the great-grandson of Mkwawa (Brockmeyer 2017, 64).

Private collection
of descendants of
Tom Prince

Rwanda

In 2016, according to the German public television channel ARD, the Rwandan ambassador claimed the return of around one thousand skulls (Fründt 2016, 42, footnote 6). The skulls had been found in the Charité and passed over to SPK in 2011 (SPK 2 August 2017). The skulls had been collected by anthropologist Jan Czekanowski, who was working for ethnologist Felix von Luschan, and have been researched by the SPK together with skulls from Tanzania as part of a research project on human remains from East Africa (Bolin 2021, 490). After an expedition to the current area of Rwanda in 1907/08 Czekanowski had acquired more than 900 skulls that became part of the *S-Collection* at the Charité.⁵⁶ SPK aims to return the skulls, though no official request for return has yet been made according to the head of the research project, archeologist Bernard Heeb (RBB 15 September 2021).

Museum für
Vor- und
Frühgeschichte
SPK
Berlin

54 Today Übersee-Museum.

55 For an overview see Brockmeyer et al. 2020. In Germany the case became publicly known with the 2001 publication *Eine Kopfjagd. Deutsche in Ostafrika: Spuren kolonialer Herrschaft* (Baer and Schröter 2001).

56 <https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/newsroom/dossiers-und-nachrichten/dossiers/dossier-provenienzforschung/luschan-sammlung.html?L=> [accessed 12 October 2021].

Namibia

Within the framework of the Human Remains Project of the Charité Berlin, skulls were repatriated to Namibia in 2011, 2014 and 2018.⁵⁷ The project was initiated as a reaction to a report in the television programme *Fakt* in 2008 (Frenzel 21 July 2008). In this report, Namibian Ambassador Peter Katjavivi claimed the human remains from Charité (Förster 2013, 433). Shortly after the broadcast, the Charité entered into negotiations about repatriation with the Namibian embassy (Wegmann 2013, 405).⁵⁸

Initially, the Charité handed over 20 skulls to a Namibian delegation in 2011. Nine skulls could be attributed to Herero individuals, eleven to Nama people. 19 of the individuals had died between the age of 20 and 40 during the colonial war (1904–1908), one young boy had died at the age of about four years (Charité 30 September 2011). Two of the Herero skulls had been gifts from the collector Arthur von Gwinner to Hans Virchow, a German anatomist and chairman of the BGAEU. The other 18 individuals had probably died between 1905 and 1907 in the prison camp on Shark Island (near Lüderitzbucht, Namibia) – most likely as a result of malnutrition and scurvy. Their corpses were decapitated on-site and their heads were sent to anatomist and anthropologist Paul Bartels in Germany for racial studies. Around 1913 the skulls became part of the anthropological collection of the Institute of Anatomy at the Berlin University (ibid.)

A handover ceremony was held at Charité in September 2011 in presence of a 70-member delegation headed by the Namibian Minister of Culture, Kazenambo Kazenambo. Although the German Federal Foreign Office had taken a mediating role in the negotiations between Namibian stakeholders and the Charité, its State Secretary Cornelia Pieper circumvented an apology for the colonial war and the resulting genocide on the occasion of the handover ceremony. This was perceived as an affront by the Namibian delegates who had regarded such an apology as appropriate and necessary and therefore had expected it from the German government officials (Wegmann 2013, 410 ff.; Förster 2020, 105 ff.; Köbler 2021, 3/4).⁵⁹ The human remains were brought to Namibia where more ceremonies were conducted. At the airport in Windhoek, a large crowd was waiting for the arrival of the delegation – people rushed to the airfield and celebrated the return of their ancestors. In the following days, a public ceremony was conducted at the Parliament Garden of Namibia as well as a state ceremony at the Heroes' Acre.⁶⁰ The human re-

57 Also as part of the project, there were returns to Australia in 2013 and 2014, and to Tasmania in 2014.

58 Already in 2004, Berlin Postkolonial organized the Anticolonial Africa Conference, which also called for the return of human remains by the Charité. It appears that this request was more of an activist act than an actual request (Wegmann 2013, 404; <https://www.nadir.org/nadir/aktuell/2004/10/13/25794.html> [accessed 12 October 2021]).

59 It was not until 2021 that the German government recognised the crimes against the Herero and Nama as genocide.

60 For more details about the Namibian ceremonies, see Förster (2013).

mains are now housed in the National Museum of Namibia in Windhoek (Förster 2013, 442).

Furthermore, the human remains of 21 individuals (18 skulls, three skeletons) were repatriated in 2014.⁶¹ These had been collected between 1898 and 1913. In this case, not only the human remains of Herero and Nama individuals but also of San, Ovambo, and Damara individuals were repatriated.⁶² Three of the Herero skulls had been collected between 1904 and 1911 in the Omaheke desert, where thousands of Hereros perished of thirst in 1904/05 after German soldiers had strategically forced them into the desert (Winkelmann and Stoecker 2014). The return ceremony in Berlin was held in the presence of a ten-member delegation led by Namibian Minister of Culture, Jerry Ekandjo, i.e. in a much smaller fashion than the first repatriation ceremony. This drew criticism from affected communities in Namibia who felt excluded from the ceremonies. A public reception took place at Windhoek's Parliament Garden, before the human remains were, again, handed over to the National Museum of Namibia (Charité 5 March 2014; Förster 2020, 111 ff.; Köbler 2021, 4).

In 2018, the Charité returned human remains alongside five other German institutions and one private repatriation (see below).

Skulls of 14 individuals of the Alexander-Ecker-Sammlung at the archive at the University of Freiburg⁶³ were returned to Namibia in 2014. As Heiko Wegmann describes it, Freiburg took a less proactive stance than the Charité. It was only when the Namibian Ambassador Neville Melvin Gertze met with the director of the University of Freiburg, Hans-Jochen Schiewer, that this was interpreted as a sign that the Namibian government was interested in repatriation (Wegmann 2013, 405/406).

In August 2018, six institutions and one private person repatriated human remains of 26 individuals in one ceremony (Winkelmann 2020a, 41; Fründt and Förster 2018, 544).

This repatriation ceremony took place in the French Cathedral at the Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin. The German Protestant Church had taken a mediating role in the negotiations and the memorial service was held by the Bishop of the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland⁶⁴, Petra Bosse-Huber, and the head of the Namibian Lutheran Church, Bishop Ernst Gamxamub (Habermalz 29 August 2018; Köbler 2021, 4/5). The Minister of State in the German Foreign Office, Michelle Müntefering, handed over the human remains to Namibian Culture Minister Katrina Hanse-Himarwa. Several Namibian traditional leaders were present. When arriving in Namibia the human remains were publicly received in Windhoek's Parliament Garden. For the first time a representative of the Federal For-

Alexander-
Ecker-Sammlung
Universitätsarchiv
Freiburg

Charité –
Universitäts-
medizin Berlin

Deutsches Institut
für Tropische und
Subtropische
Landwirtschaft
Witzenhausen

Landesmuseum
Hannover

Universitäts-
klinikum
Hamburg-
Eppendorf

61 During the same ceremony human remains from the University of Freiburg were repatriated (Köbler 2021, 4; see also below).

62 More details about the concrete circumstances can be found here: https://anatomie.charite.de/ueber_den_faecherverbund/human_remains_projekt/restitution_of_namibian_remains_2014/ [accessed 11 October 2021].

63 Today, the Alexander-Ecker-Sammlung is part of the archive of the University of Freiburg.

64 Protestant Church of Germany.

Phyletisches
Museum
Universität Jena

Institut für
Anatomie und
Zellbiologie
Universität
Greifswald

Private collection
of Gerhard
Ziegenfuß
Ennigerloh

Senckenberg
Naturmuseum
Frankfurt am Main

eign Office, State Secretary Michelle Müntefering, travelled along to Namibia and gave a speech there (*ibid.*).

The Charité returned human remains of Herero, Nama, Ovambo and San individuals. The University of Greifswald repatriated three skulls of Herero and Nama individuals.⁶⁵ The Deutsches Institut für Tropische und Subtropische Landwirtschaft (DITSL) returned one skull of a Nama individual.⁶⁶ The Landesmuseum Hannover repatriated the human remains of three Nama individuals. The Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf repatriated the skull of a Herero.⁶⁷ The Phyletisches Museum returned a scalp fragment which probably belonged to a Herero individual.⁶⁸

The skull in the possession of Gerhard Ziegenfuß was also returned in the course of these repatriations (Fründt and Förster 2018, 544) (see below). The reporter Bernhard Pfletschinger followed the process of this case, with all its difficulties (Pfletschinger 19 November 2016). Gerhard Ziegenfuß himself wrote a book in which he recapitulates his experiences in the return process (Ziegenfuß and Rücker 2018). Sometime after 1900, the missionary Alois Ziegenfuß brought a skull from Namibia to Germany. Family legend claimed this to be the skull of a chief whose followers were converted by Ziegenfuß, and that the members of the group gifted the missionary the skull as a sign of gratitude (Niehaus 20 July 2018; Pfletschinger 19 November 2016). More than one hundred years later a descendant of Alois, Gerhard Ziegenfuß, decided to return the skull. He contacted the Namibian embassy in Berlin with an offer for return but the embassy required more information regarding the specific origin of the skull. An examination at the Institute of Legal Medicine at the University of Münster revealed that the skull was likely to originate from a male individual from sub-Saharan Africa (Fründt and Förster 2018, 544). The skull could then be repatriated in 2018 as part of the above-mentioned repatriation of human remains to Namibia (Deutschlandfunk Kultur 28 February 2019).

In 2016, Senckenberg Naturmuseum notified the Namibian embassy of two skulls attributed to Ovaherero in its holdings and indicated its willingness to repatriate the remains.⁶⁹

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- 65 They were a gift by Georg Wetzel in 1941. In 2010 the director of the Institut für Anatomie und Zellbiologie in Greifswald, Karlhans Endlich, received an email from the board of the Anatomische Gesellschaft asking to check his own collection for human remains from Namibia (Oberdörfer 18 October 2018).
- 66 It was a gift from Harry von Schoenermarck, a former pupil of the Deutsche Kolonialschule in Witzenhausen (DKS), which was a predecessor organisation of DITSL. A detailed account of the provenance can be found in Hulverscheidt and Stoecker (2017, 210 ff.).
- 67 Wilhelm Weygandt was a psychiatrist and director of the Friedrichsberg State Hospital. Between 1905 and 1934 he collected about 1.185 ethnographic objects, human remains and animal preparations (<https://kolonialismus.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/2017/04/20/provenienzforschung-in-hamburg-human-remains-aus-deutschen-kolonien-gefunden/> [accessed 19 October 2021]).
- 68 Larissa Förster and Holger Stoecker have extensively researched and documented the case (Förster and Stoecker 2016).
- 69 Email from Friedemann Schrenk to Zoe Schoofs on 26 October 2021. We would like to thank him for the provided information.

Some of the above-mentioned returns from German institutions to Namibia had been solicited by the Namibian embassy. In 2013, the German Museums Association had forwarded a letter by the Namibian embassy and the German Foreign Office to its member institutions (Förster 2020, 111). The letter asked museums with human remains of Namibian origin in their holdings to report the provenance and whereabouts of the remains to the embassy. It was recirculated in 2016. A number of institutions reacted upon the letter and contacted the Namibian embassy so that the Namibian government could prepare the concerted repatriation of 2018.

III. Hominin Remains

Senckenberg
Naturmuseum
Frankfurt am Main

Indonesia

In 1975 and 1978 hominin remains – known as the Ngandong skulls and the Mojokerto child – were returned to Indonesian palaeontologist Teuku Jacob. These 15 *Homo erectus* remains had been excavated by the *Geological Survey of the Netherlands Indies* together with the German archeologist Ralph von Koenigswald on the island of Java in the 1930s (Drieënhuizen and Sysling 2021, 294 and 303). Von Koenigswald had personally taken care of the specimens, and even though he was running a palaeontology department of the Senckenberg Forschungsinstitut und Naturmuseum Frankfurt at the time of return, no other objects of the museum were returned to Jacob since only these had been collected under Dutch authority (ibid 304).

IV. Animal Remains

Museum für
Naturkunde
Berlin

Tanzania

The only case in which specimens of natural history have been requested from Germany is well documented by Heumann et al. (2018) in their book on the paleontological expeditions to Tendaguru in Tanzania between 1909–1913. The expeditions led to the excavation of the skeleton of a *Giraffatitan brancai*, its subsequent transport to Germany, and its incorporation into the collection of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, where it is still exhibited today.

In 1987 in Arusha, Tanzania, the director of the National Museum of Tanzania and vice president of ICOM's Committee for Museums and Collections of Natural History, Fidelis Masao, inquired whether a permanent loan of one or two great bones of the dinosaur *Giraffatitan brancai* to Tanzania would be possible. The inquiry was passed on by Ralf Schummer, a biologist at the Museum für Naturkunde in then East Berlin who voiced his support for the loan (ibid., 267). Schummer addressed the possible return of the bones at different times during 1988, without success (ibid., 270). Since 2003, debates have developed around the importance of those objects, which were removed from Tanzania in colonial times, for the country's national heritage today. Within these debates the skeleton of the *Giraffatitan brancai* occupies a central role for the Tanzanian parliament, museums, other national institutions, and in the media (ibid., 270–272). Representatives from the southern part of the country have been particularly vocal in advocating for a return of the skeleton and the construction of an exhibition building close to the original excavation site (ibid.). In May 2018 the Tanzanian Foreign Minister Augustine Mahiga assured his German counterpart Heiko Maas that Tanzania did not plan an official request for the skeleton or other museum objects that had been brought into German museums during colonial times (ibid.). However, the issue of Tanzanian cultural heritage held by European institutions is of growing importance in Tanzania, and according to Abdallah Possi, the country's ambassador in Germany, the current politicisation of the matter could cause an official request for an inquiry into the subject of both human remains, as well as the history of the dinosaur skeleton (Häntzschel 5 February 2020).

V. Cultural Objects

Ethnologisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

Colombia

The following case is a pending case that goes back to 1914. A detailed treatment of this case has been accounted for by Manuela Fischer (2019) and Lars Müller (2021a). From 1913 to 1919 Konrad Theodor Preuss, curator of the North American collections at the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, travelled to Colombia, especially to the San Agustín region, to conduct research and collect artefacts (Kroener 7 June 2021). Preuss' plan was known to the authorities, and the Colombian president at the time, Carlos Eugenio Restrepo, was aware of Preuss' research. The landowner on whose property Preuss was digging, General Ricaurte López, also allowed him to take sculptures. Despite this official status, the removal of the sculptures was reported by the local community.⁷⁰ Preuss exported items out of Columbia using counterfeit papers deliberately circumventing the 1906 ban on exports of antiquities, as he explicitly wrote in a letter to Wilhelm von Bode, director general of the Königliche Museen zu Berlin⁷¹ (ibid.).

Manuela Fischer, currently custodian at the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin, classifies this approach as a criminal act and supports a return of the more than 20 sculptures (ibid.). Even though the museum is willing to return the sculptures, several institutional actors are involved in Colombia: first, the Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia (ICANH), which is charged by the state with managing the archeological park of San Agustín;⁷² second, the indigenous community of Yanacoña, which considers the area as a sacred region; and, third, the municipality of San Agustín, which represents economic interests (Fischer 2019, 4). The latter has been pursuing efforts to return the sculptures located in Berlin since 2012, but this has not been supported by the Colombian state. A petition for a referendum to advance the project was also unsuccessful. However, in 2017 the Administrative Court in Bogotá issued a

70 There were seven transports, each involving several boxes, from Columbia to Germany between 1914 and 1922. (Fischer 2019, 17/18).

71 Predecessor of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

72 For more information on this case see Losson (2022).

ruling obliging the Colombian government to make restitution efforts as a result of a legal dispute. As a consequence, representatives of ICANH travelled to Berlin in 2019, but without issuing an official demand (Kroener 7 June 2021). The US-American David Dellenback who has been living in San Agustín for many years has been demanding a return of the sculptures. Without a mandate from the Colombian government, he has addressed his request directly to Hermann Parzinger (Fischer 2019, 4). In a letter to David Dellenback in 2013, Parzinger declared that ‘the Colombian government has obviously known about the sculptures’ whereabouts in Berlin without having submitted any concrete claim for repatriation to the German government’ (Parzinger 3 June 2013, 2). As of 2021 ICANH, and thereby the Colombian state has not yet commented on a possible return, but classifies the statues as ‘ambassadors and representatives of the country in Europe’ (Kroener 7 June 2021).

Canada

Speyer Collection
Private collection
of Arthur Speyer
Wiesbaden

In 1968 William C. Sturtevant, then curator of North American ethnology in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, visited the Deutsches Ledermuseum in Offenbach together with Ted J. Brassler from Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden (Netherlands), to see parts of the Speyer Collection on display there.⁷³ The Speyer Collection had been assembled by private collector Arthur Speyer (1858–1923) and comprised of objects from Africa, Oceania and the Americas (Sturtevant 2001, 163). The exhibition in Offenbach was accompanied by a publication by Arthur Speyer junior, grandson of Arthur Speyer (*ibid.*, 164). After the exhibition, the Speyer collection was dispersed (*ibid.*), and when Brassler took up a position in the National Museum of Man⁷⁴ in 1970 he convinced the museum to buy most of the North America collection as part of a greater repatriation programme in Canadian museums (*ibid.*, 165; see also Brassler 1976). Jeanette Greenfield (2007, 177–180) specifies that the return took place in 1973/1974. Sturtevant however, contested that all of the objects returned had been assembled in Canada, but argued that many of them had been taken from tribes within present-day United States (Sturtevant 2001, 165; see also Feest 1995, 34).

United States of America

Ethnologisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

A delegation from the Chugach Alaska Corporation⁷⁵ visited the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin in 2015 to initiate cooperation between the two institutions (SPK 19 December 2017) as part of a European tour searching for human remains and initiating possible returns (König 2020,

73 We would like to thank Christian Feest for supporting us on this case.

74 Since 2013: Canadian Museum of History.

75 The Chugach Alaska Corporation is an interest organisation representing financial and cultural interests of native people in the Chugach region (<https://www.chugach.com/> [accessed 19 October 2021]).

Weltkulturen
Museum
Frankfurt am Main

162).⁷⁶ No human remains were found in the museum in Berlin, but due to the preparatory work of the museum's director Viola König and the representative of the Chugach Alaska Corporation, John Johnson, the Chugach asked for the return of funerary goods from Chenega Island in southern Alaska (*ibid.*). This was followed by a verbal note by the US-American government to the German foreign ministry in 2017. Experts from SPK, along with the foreign ministry, were in favour of the return and presented the case to the museum's Board of Trustees, who approved the return on 18 December 2017 (Jöbstl 18 December 2017). Nine objects were handed over to the Corporation on 16 May 2018. The object group consisted of funerary goods and included, among other things, wooden masks, oil lamps, and a child carrier. These had been brought to Berlin by the collector Johan Adrian Jacobsen, who had been commissioned by the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde to travel through North America. From Jacobsen's travel accounts it is known that he opened graves without permission from indigenous groups or authorities (*ibid.*). These very accounts and commentaries proved the unlawful removal of the objects (*ibid.*, 164).⁷⁷

On 12 June 2021, Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main returned the leather shirt of Chief Daniel Hollow Horn Bear to his great-grandson and successor Chief Duane Hollow Horn Bear. The return is well documented by the museum (Weltkulturen Museum 8 July 2021). In 2019 Chief Duane Hollow Horn Bear had inspected the shirt in the museum and subsequently asked for its return, with which the museum and Frankfurt's city councillor for culture and science, Ina Hartwig, complied. The shirt had been in the collection in Frankfurt since 1908 after it had been part of an exchange with the American Museum of Natural History in New York (which had received it in 1906) (*ibid.*). Weltkulturen Museum emphasised that the return was carried out for moral and ethical reasons even though it could not be established under which circumstances the shirt had been acquired from Chief Daniel Hollow Horn Bear and ended up in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History. The handover took place in Rosebud, South Dakota, USA (*ibid.*).

Papua New Guinea

Mission EineWelt
Neuendettelsau

Inspired by the prior debates in the UN, Missionswerk der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern attempted to return objects to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea in the 1980s.⁷⁸ The return was declared in 1986, but the realisation had to await the construction of a museum for this purpose (Ost 1986, 7). The ethnographic objects to be returned had been collected during missionary work on the island (*ibid.*), where the Neuendettelsau Mission had been active since

76 We would like to thank Viola König for her support on this case.

77 See Schlothauer (2018) for an alternate view on the return.

78 We thank Mission EineWelt, and in particular Heide Lienert-Emmerlich for providing information on the case and Hanns Hoerschelmann for the permission to quote from the memorandum.

1886.⁷⁹ According to a *Memorandum of Understanding between Mission on One World (MOW) / the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (ELCB) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELC-PNG)* issued in 2017, a ‘commemorative museum’ had been ‘discussed and envisioned for in 1986 at the historic meeting between the Bishop Sir Zurewec Zurenuoc and Johannes Hanselmann’ with a traditional shield of the Neuendettelsau collection being handed over as a “‘firstfruit” of the commitment’ (Memorandum 2017). Until now, the museum has not been realised due to ‘political, legal and inner-church circumstances and considerations’ (ibid.). The Memorandum also states that ELC-PNG has ‘a moral entitlement to these objects’ and that the objects will be returned when the local circumstances in Papua New Guinea allow it. Until then, MOW/ELCB ‘is committed to safeguard, preserve and respect these ethnographic objects as custodian’ (ibid.).

Burma/Myanmar

Hamburgisches
Museum für
Völkerkunde
Hamburg

In 1967 the Burmese Ministry of Culture approached the West German embassy in Rangoon with a return request. This case is presented in detail by Lars Müller (2021a) but since this case was also topical in the 1970s and 1980s, it will be briefly discussed here as well. The objects requested for return are frescoes from the ancient city Pagan in Burma/Myanmar, removed by Theodor Heinrich Thomann, a ‘professional treasure hunter, pretending as an archeologist’ (Zöllner 2002, 45) in 1899 and sold to the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg in 1906 (Müller 2021a, 36). A possible return was discussed in the German Bundestag in 1968: the Parliamentary State Secretary Gerhard Jahn spoke out against a return based on the statements of the West German cultural authorities and the museum, that the frescoes had been legally acquired in Germany. However, he also showed understanding of Burma’s/Myanmar’s request and called for further contemplation on how to deal with the claim in other ways. Simultaneously, the SPD delegate Georg Kahn-Ackermann emphasised the unjust contexts from which the objects had originally come, as well as the conclusive research of the objects. Based on this research, Kahn-Ackermann stated that nothing stood in the way of a return from a scientific point of view.⁸⁰ Later, Burma/Myanmar modified this demand and requested photographs of the frescoes instead. Conversations about a return resumed in the 1980s (ibid., 35/36).

Sri Lanka

Universitäts-
bibliothek
Jena

In 1981, a member of the Sri Lankan UNESCO delegation in Paris pleaded with the East German representative to look into the possibility of a

79 <https://mission-einewelt.de/internationale-beziehungen/partnerkirchen-uebersee/papua-neuguinea-elc-png/#toggle-id-6> [accessed 19 October 2021].

80 Plenarprotokoll Deutscher Bundestag, 203. Sitzung, 6 December 1968, S. 10927/10928 (<https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/05/05203.pdf> [accessed 05 October 2021]).

manuscript being kept at the University of Jena. Previously, in 1980, the government of Sri Lanka had presented a ‘catalog of return’ to UNESCO which also included 600 objects kept in West Germany (Ganslmayr and Paczensky 1984, 189). The German Democratic Republic wished to deal with the case bilaterally, and in March 1982 it was confirmed that the manuscript was in the university library in Jena,⁸¹ where it had been received as a gift from a merchant from the neighbouring city Gera. According to the available sources, the merchant had bought the manuscript in Sri Lanka in 1925. The foreign ministry of the GDR announced that if Sri Lanka would want to go further in their request – or even request a return – the case would have to be dealt with anew (Pupeter 2020). To our knowledge, the further development of this case has not been researched.

Iraq

Vorderasiatisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

According to the newspaper *The Guardian* (MacAskill 4 May 2002; see also Greenfield 2007, 268), Mohammed Aziz Selman al-Ibrahim, an Iraqi archeologist and official of the Antiquities and Heritage Department of the country’s Ministry of Culture, appealed in 2002 to the German government to return antiquities to Iraq. Among these antiquities was the Babylonian Ishtar Gate removed by German archeologists and presented in the Vorderasiatisches Museum within the Pergamon Museum since 1930. In 2013, the Iraqi student Zeidoun Alkinani posted a photo of himself in front of the gate with a sign saying: ‘This belongs to Iraq’. The photo quickly circulated widely on social media (Micossé-Aikins and Sharifi 2016, 81; Dressen et al., 2021, 294).

Turkey

Vorderasiatisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

Since 1938, as Lars Müller writes, Turkey has requested the return of cuneiform tablets and two Hittite statues of stone sphinxes, excavated in Boğazköy in the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century (Müller 2021a, 30). According to ethnologist Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin the first Sphinx was returned already in 1924, and the second on 27 July 2011 (Hauser-Schäublin 2013, 164). According to Jos van Beurden (2017, 104), in addition to the first Sphinx, 3.000 cuneiform tablets from Boğazköy were returned between the 1920s and 1930s, as well as a remaining 7.400 tablets from the GDR in 1987.⁸² Turkey requested the return of the second Hittite Sphinx at UNESCO’s *Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation* in 1987, which discussed the case repeatedly at meetings (Hauser-Schäublin 2013, 162). In 2010 Turkey made

81 In 1991 the library was renamed Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek.
82 For the latter see also: <https://plone.unige.ch/art-adr/cases-affaires/bogazkoy-sphinx-2013-turkey-and-germany> [accessed 21 October 2021]. No further information regarding the return of the cuneiform tablets could be obtained.

Pergamonmuseum
SPK
Berlin

UNESCO aware of a stalemate in the bilateral negotiations with Germany, but the following year UNESCO was able to announce the successful agreement to return the Sphinx, an agreement probably reached at the highest levels of government in both Turkey and Germany, and without the direct intervention of UNESCO. As Hauser-Schäublin states '[t]he negotiations involved different actors of both states in this matter: museum experts and representatives of the SPK, ministers, civil servants and politicians at different levels' (Ibid., 164). According to Hauser-Schäublin, the return needs to be understood in connection with the wider political relationship between Turkey and Germany. The Sphinx is now exhibited in the Boğazköy Museum in Corum, Turkey (Balkiz 2021).

The Pergamon altar was never officially requested by the Turkish government, but local politicians in Turkey are requesting the Hellenistic altar dedicated to Zeus be returned. Among those in favour of this claim is Sefa Taşkın, who as the former mayor of Bergama had argued for the altar's return since 1990, where he organised a protest in front of the altar in what was then East Berlin (Gottschlich and Zaptcioglu-Gottschlich 2021, 283). According to the Minister of Culture and Tourism in 2013, Ömer Çelik, the Turkish state did not officially demand the return of the Pergamon Altar, although it wished to acquire 'the tomb of Hacı Ibrahim Veli, a fisherman statue from Aphrodisias and the prayer niche from the Beyhekom Mosque in Konya (...), a window frame from the same mosque, and (...) Iznik tiles from the Piyale Pasha Mosque in Istanbul' – objects also held in Berlin (*Der Spiegel* 14 March 2013). According to Çelik, unlike the Pergamon altar, these objects were exported illegally out of the Ottoman Empire.

Egypt

Staatliches Museum
Ägyptischer Kunst
Munich

Until 1915 the sarcophagus of Smenkhkare, the son of Pharaoh Akhenaten, was displayed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.⁸³ At that time, fragments of the coffin⁸⁴ were taken to Carlo Orpesa, a restorer who was not a staff member at the museum, and have been officially recorded as missing since 1931 (Grimm and Schoske 2001, 1). It appears that they have been stolen between 1915 and 1931 – the circumstances and the thief are unknown to this day (Grimm 2001a, 64). It is not known to what extent colonial unjust contexts made the theft possible, but senior positions at the museum in Cairo were held by British citizens at the time of the theft, for instance, James Edward Quibell as director (1914–1923) and Alfred Lucas as conservator (ibid.).

In 1980 Dietrich Wildung, then director of the Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst in Munich bought the missing fragments from Nicolas

83 Based on the blood type of the corpse, scientists assume that Smenkhkare was buried in this sarcophagus. The sarcophagus was found in the burial chamber KV 55 by Theodore Monroe Davis and Edward Russell Ayrton in 1907 (Grimm 2001, 52).

84 The fragments comprised gold foil, inlays of semi-precious stones in the form of hieroglyphs and several pieces of wood.

Neues Museum
SPK
Berlin

Koutoulakis, a trader of Aegyptiaca. According to Sylvia Schoske, director of the museum in 2001 and wife of Wildung, the latter recognised the pieces and purchased them to restore and return them to Egypt. Supposedly, the Egyptian Minister of Culture, the Chairman of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization and the general director of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo were also involved in the restoration (Grimm and Schoske 2001, 1). The pieces were subsequently repaired.

In 1994 the museum, together with the Bavarian Ministry of Culture, began negotiating with the Egyptian government (under exclusion of the public) about possible returning conditions (*Der Spiegel* 17 October 1999). In 2000 premier of the German State of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, declared an imminent return of the restored parts of the sarcophagus – right after the exhibition *Das Geheimnis des goldenen Sarges – Echnaton und das Ende der Amarnazeit*⁸⁵ in the Staatliches Museum Ägyptischer Kunst in Munich (17 October 2001 – 6 January 2002). In 2002 the parts were returned to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Letz 17 October 2001).

On 6 December 1912 the German archeologist Ludwig Borchardt excavated the bust of Nefertiti,⁸⁶ and a year later the ‘colourful queen’ of Pharaoh Akhenaten was brought to Berlin. Since 1925, claims for her return have been regularly articulated, as art historian Bénédicte Savoy (2011, 9) writes in one of the many publications on the case. It was on 12 May 1925 that the French council of antiquities in Cairo under the director Pierre Lacau first demanded the return of the bust from Germany (ibid., 13). Following this, in 1930, James Simon pleaded for the return of Nefertiti to Egypt. Simon, a merchant from Berlin who had funded the expedition and archeological excavation in Tell el-Amarna that led to the discovery of the bust, argued publicly for Nefertiti’s return (Ganslmeyr and Paczensky 1984, 303–305; See also Rauterberg 7 March 2018; Brusius 2021, 129; Gottschlich and Zaptcioglu-Gottschlich 2021, 226).

According to the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* (*Der Spiegel* 3 January 1947), the national-socialist regime had formally announced the return of Nefertiti to the Egyptian King but never carried it out, according to Jürgen Gottschlich and Dilek Zaptcioglu-Gottschlich (2021, 227) because Hitler himself had publicly spoken against it and had argued, that Nefertiti was German. When she was exhibited in the spring of 1946 – and her making it unharmed through the Second World War thus became known – Egypt announced its claim to the statue, and the Egyptian Minister of Education, Ashmawi Pascha, began negotiating with the American ambassador in Cairo. Likewise, the Egyptian ambassador in Washington was commissioned to follow the subject (ibid).

In 1975, as the East and West Germans fought over where to display Nefertiti, the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram suggested returning the statue to its place of origin (*Der Spiegel* 2 December 1979). Former

85 The Secret of the Golden Casket – Akhenaten and the End of the Amarna Period.

86 In German known as Nofretete.

Ethnologisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs, Zahi Hawass, has requested the return of Nefertiti for a long time (Savoy 2011, 9), in particular, he argued for a three-month loan of the statue to display it at the opening of the new Egyptian Museum at the Giza pyramid complex (Seidler and Windfuhr 19 April 2008). According to the then Representative of the Federal Government for Culture, Bernd Neumann, the bust was regarded as too old and fragile to travel (*Der Spiegel* 13 April 2007). In 2011, Hawass claimed to have sent an official request for the return of the bust, though the German Cultural Ministry and SPK denied that such a letter signed by the head of the Egyptian state had been received – they had, however, received a letter signed by other Egyptian representatives (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 24 January 2011).

Zimbabwe

On 14 May 2003, the bottom fragment of a soapstone bird from the Great Zimbabwe era was returned – as a permanent loan – from SPK to State President Robert Mugabe at an official ceremony in the State House in Harare.⁸⁷ Upon this official handover of the bird fragment, the president of Zimbabwe's Chief's Council, Alois Mangwende, gave a speech in the Shona language. The chief said, that the bird might have returned, 'because the Bird's aggrieved spirit (*Ngozi yeShiri*) was haunting its captors' (Mangwende quoted in Matenga 2011, 161) and continued:

'They did not know that they were dealing with an aggrieved spirit. These are painful signs of the effect of *Ngozi*. In Shona custom, if a sacred object has been stolen restitution must be done. In the same way the Europeans had learned a lesson that the stolen sacred Bird must be returned to its owners as country after country failed to keep the bird because of its restless spirit' (ibid., 162).

The chief advocated for a second ceremony, held on 7 May 2004, at which the bird fracture was handed over to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) at the archeological site of Great Zimbabwe. This event included 'chiefs, the state apparatus, politics and matters of the spirit' (Matenga 2011, 168).

The prelude to the return first began with the preparation for the 1997/1998 exhibition *Legacies of Stone: Zimbabwe Past and Present* at the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, after the anthropologist Bill Dewey confirmed that the lower half of a bird was in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin. SPK had supported the exhibition of the bird in Belgium, where the lower part was reunited with its upper half for the first time in nearly a century (ibid., 198). The exhibition was the impetus for a series of events, recounted by Edward Matenga in detail (ibid., 198/199), which led to the permanent loan of the bird. These events will only shortly be referred to here: President Robert Mugabe visited the exhibition in Tervuren in January 1998; Matenga himself publis-

87 Edward Matenga, director of the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site at the time of the return, dealt with the case extensively in his doctoral thesis (2011).

hed a book in June 1998 on the soapstone birds of Great Zimbabwe; the Zimbabwean Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, appealed to the South African and German ambassadors during the launch of Matenga's book, initiating dialogues towards returning the birds and fragments of the birds from those countries; in Germany, the documentary film *Zimbabwe Birds* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and Olaf Koschke was released which appealed for the return of the fragment by the Museum für Völkerkunde;⁸⁸ and in 1998 Stan Mudenge, the Zimbabwean Minister of Foreign Affairs, held informal talks in Germany with his German counterpart, Joschka Fischer, who 'spontaneously pledged to facilitate the return of the Bird' (ibid., 199). According to Mudenge, this would be a loan 'in perpetuity' (ibid.) which Mudenge found more important than under which legal circumstances the bird was returned. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NMMZ drafted an *Aide Memoire* requesting the bird from the German Government and in 2000 the German Ambassador to Zimbabwe Peter Schmidt secretly handed over the fragment to NMMZ under a memorandum of understanding, in which the bird was being returned to Zimbabwe on a 'permanent loan', while the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation would remain technically the 'Legal Owners of the Fragment' (Munjeri 2009, 18). Due to this arrangement of legally avoiding restitution and return, it was ensured that Germany was not bound by international law on these matters. The fragment was kept in Zimbabwe until the ceremony in 2003. Today, the fragment is exhibited at the museum at Great Zimbabwe (Murray 2016, 203).

The fragment of the bird had originally been sold to the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin in 1907 for 500 Reichsmark by reverend Karl Theodor Georg Axenfield, a member of the Berlin Mission in South Africa (Matenga 2011, 75).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the early 1980s, Haus der Völker und Kulturen in St. Augustin near Bonn, the ethnographic museum of the Steyler Mission (SVD) returned more than 30 Congolese objects – which had been on permanent loan in the museum – to the loaning institution in Belgium. The Belgian institution intended to return the objects to Democratic Republic of the Congo upon a request by its President Mobutu Sese Seko. Haus der Völker und Kulturen kept copies of the objects that had been produced by the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz.⁸⁹

Haus der Völker
und Kulturen
St. Augustin

88 Dangarembga produced the movie in 1996 together with Olaf Koschke for the program 'Metropolis' of the German-French public service channel Arte. We would like to thank Olaf Koschke for this information.

89 Personal communication of Josef Franz Thiel to Larissa Förster, 18 October 2021. See also Kohl (17 May 2018).

Namibia

Übersee-Museum
Bremen

In 1996 two copy letter books (called Witbooi Journals II and III) were returned to the National Archive of Namibia from the Übersee-Museum in Bremen. Their author, Hendrik Witbooi (approx. 1830–1905), had been an independent military and political Nama leader in southern Namibia under German colonial rule. The books were two out of four journals that Witbooi had kept during this time, in which he recorded correspondences and administrative documents. The books had ended up in the museum through the trader August Wulff from Bremen, who was an acquaintance of Witbooi. Wulff had obtained the books from Witbooi's deserted home in Gibeon which had been left when its inhabitants fled the German persecutions in 1904. Wulff later sold the books to the museum in Bremen (Namhila 2019, 18/19). Once in the museum, Witbooi's journals were swiftly forgotten and only rediscovered in 1994 by historian Bettina von Briskorn (ibid; Gustafsson 2003).⁹⁰ The Übersee-Museum had the books restored and proposed to return them due to their historical importance for Namibia (Gustafsson 2003, 520/521). On the occasion of a state visit of Namibian President Sam Nujoma in 1996 to Bremen, the journals were officially handed over by the Mayor Henning Scherf (ibid.) and brought to the Namibian National Archives where Journal I had already been kept.

Private collection
of Klaus Göbel
Munich

German colonial soldiers in Rietmond had taken a fourth book, Journal IV, and divided the pages among themselves as loot. Some of these pages were returned in 2005 from a collector in Munich, Klaus Göbel, thereby joining the remaining journals in the Namibian National Archive. The copy of one of the letters, along with further documents, was handed over to Hendrik Witbooi, the great-grandson of Witbooi, on the official 100th anniversary of his forefather's death (Allgemeine Zeitung 3 November 2005).⁹¹

Private collections
Location unknown

Ellen Ndeshi Namhila (2019, 19) briefly mentions two books looted at the same time by German soldiers and returned to the Witbooi family from private custody. A book with hymns and psalms printed in the Dutch language was returned in 1989 and a psalm book was returned in 1996.

Linden-Museum
Stuttgart

The Bible (the New Testament in Nama/Khoekhoegowab) and a riding whip of Hendrik Witbooi were taken by German colonial troops at Hornkranz on 12 April 1893 and ended up – for unclear reasons – in the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart (Köbler 2019, 4/5). Sociologist Reinhart Köbler (2019; 2021) has researched this case extensively. In 2017 the government of Baden-Württemberg denied a return, despite the illegitimate circumstances of the looting of the objects proved through provenance research by the museum (Köbler 2021, 7). It is not clear what exactly led to the change of opinions in Baden-Württemberg. Motives notwith-

90 We would like to thank Bettina von Briskorn for this information.

91 In 2008 Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, pro-vice-chancellor of the University of Namibia, received digitised letters written by Witbooi to the German colonial officer Kurt Schwabe from the Adelhausermuseum in Freiburg. Namhila has expressed her wish for a return of the letters (Badische Zeitung 15 May 2018).

standing, the final preparation for a return proceeded without greater conflicts between the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture and the representatives of Baden-Württemberg (ibid, 8). Shortly before the return, the relatives of Hendrik Witbooi, along with the /Khowese ethnic group, objected that the Namibian state and the president of Namibia would receive what they considered their family heirlooms, although they did support the overall return. Also, the *Nama Traditional Leaders Association* made claims for the heirloom (Köbler 2019, 11). The handover of the bible and the whip took place on 28 February 2019 in the town of Gibeon, i.e. in the region where Witbooi once held leadership, but the objects are as of yet under the care of the National Museum and the National Archives in Windhoek (Köbler 2021, 8).

Deutsches
Historisches
Museum
Berlin

In 1486 Portuguese explorers erected a stone cross (*padrão*), north of Swakopmund to mark their presence in the area. In 1893, however, the German colonial power removed the cross and shipped it to Berlin (Buchwald 2019).⁹² According to Köbler (2021, 7), Namibia had claimed the return of the *padrão* since 1990, with the German federal government reacting positively to the claim since 2018. According to Claudia Buchwald, the Namibian government claimed the cross in a verbal note in 2017 (Buchwald 2019, 11). In August 2019 the *padrão* left the Deutsches Historisches Museum, where it had been on display, for Walvis Bay in Namibia (Köbler 2021, 7).

Städtisches
Museum
Braunschweig

On the occasion of the first repatriation of mortal remains of Namibian individuals from Berlin to Windhoek in 2011 (see p. 25), a claim for an object symbolising African resistance against German colonialism was articulated. In a speech in Berlin, Alfons Maharero, Chairman of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu Council for Dialogue on the 1904 Genocide, mentioned the capture and execution of an Ovaherero chief by the German colonial army.⁹³ According to Maharero the chief's belt was and is of great historical significance, but it was lost in the course of events. As it turned out later, he referred to Ovambanderu chief Kahimemua Nguvauva who led the 1896 uprising of the Ovambanderu against German colonial oppression. Kahimemua's gun and ammunition belt had indeed been confiscated, Nguvauva himself had been executed. In 2020, research by German journalist Christiane Habermalz and Namibian historian Werner Hillebrecht led to the identification of an object in the ethnographic collection of Städtisches Museum Braunschweig as Kahimemua's belt (Habermalz 5 February 2020). The museum engaged in a dialogue with descendants of Kahimemua Nguvauva with the aim of returning the belt.⁹⁴

92 On 7 June 2018 Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin held a symposium on the *padrão* (see Deutsches Historisches Museum (2019).

93 Personal communication Larissa Förster, 16.10.2022.

94 <https://www.provenienzforschung-niedersachsen.de/patronengurt-gehorte-le-gendaerem-anfuehrer-der-ovambanderu/>

Museum Fünf
Kontinente
Munich

Cameroon

Over the past few years, the *tange* in the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich has been extensively discussed in the media and thoroughly researched by ethnologist Anja Splettstößer (2015; 2019). A *tange* is a coloured boat ornament that was regarded as a sign of rulership in Western Cameroon (Splettstößer 2015, 200). The *tange* came into the collection of the Königlich Ethnographische Sammlung in 1885 as a gift from Max Buchner, a German physician who travelled to Cameroon for the Afrikanische Gesellschaft and later became director of the Königlich Ethnographische Sammlung in Munich. The *tange* was the former property of Kum'a Mbapes, the head of the Bele Bele at the end of the 19th century. When Prince Alexandre Kum'a Ndumbe III., a member of the Bele Bele, first saw the *tange* on display in the museum in the 1990s, he reclaimed it for his family. Kum'a Ndumbe lives in Germany, is the founder of the *AfricAvenir International*, an independent non-profit organisation,⁹⁵ and sees himself as the heir to the Bele Bele (ibid., 200 ff.; 209). Kum'a Ndumbe has been confirmed as heir to the throne by the Council of Elders, though he does not hold the official position of Chef Supérieur of the Bele Bele today. Thus, he is not the head of the Bele Bele which raises the question of whether Kum'a Ndumbe is entitled to claim the return of the *tange* (ibid., 207). According to Splettstößer, he spoke to journalists and expressed his opinion in the newspapers, but he never submitted an official written request for return. Rather, requests were made via third parties such as [*muc*] *postcolonial*, a group that deals with Munich's colonial past.⁹⁶ These requests were rejected by the Bavarian State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts in 1999 and 2010, respectively (ibid., 201; 215ff). In 2016 Kum'a Ndumbe together with representatives of the Museum and the Bavarian Ministry convened at a meeting that marked the first time all actors spoke to each other in almost two decades (Eisenhofer 2018, 202).

Although the museum is willing to return, as of 2020 neither the Cameroonian government nor Kum'a Ndumbe's family has officially reclaimed the *tange* (Hermanski 5 February 2020; Buchwald 1 March 2021).

Since the 1990s, the Fon⁹⁷ of the Nso' community, Sehm Mbinglo I, has made claims for a statue of a bowl bearer, also known as Ngonnso'.⁹⁸ The statue came into the museum's collection in 1903 as a donation by the Prussian officer Kurt von Pavel. Presumably, Pavel came into possession of the Ngonnso' in 1902 during a 'punitive expedition', which he led.

Ethnologisches
Museum
SPK
Berlin

95 <https://www.africavenir.org/de.html> [accessed 20 November 2021].

96 <http://muc.postkolonial.net/> [accessed 21 October 2021].

97 A Fon is a ruler in the Cameroon grasslands. The term is often equated with the term 'king' (Splettstößer 2019, 17).

98 Bongasu Tanla Kishani, former lecturer at the University of Yaoundé, saw the figure on display in 1974 – in his opinion he was the first to start the discussion about the object: 'I alerted the Nso' about Ngonnso'. In 1985 I had to address the Lamnso' speaking group about the existence of Ngonnso' (Kishani in Splettstößer 2019, 299). He is also the one who started to call it Ngonnso'.

Anne Spletstößer has published a study on the case (2019). According to Spletstößer, in the 1990s the Fon was supported in his request by new elites of the Nso' as well as by Ulli Beier, founder of the Iwalewa-Haus, which is part of the University of Bayreuth (ibid. 2019, 281 ff.; 302).⁹⁹ In 2007, the Fon contacted Cameroon's Minister of Culture in Yaoundé through the Provincial delegate of culture in Bamenda and presented the case with a support request. However, at this time, the Fon neither received a response nor did state authorities support the Fon's request (ibid., 304). In 2011, the Nso' sent a request for return to the SPK. SPK rejected the request, arguing that the figure is legally owned by the museum. The SPK proposed a loan on the condition that international museum standards be maintained on-site. When Sehm Mbinglo I answered this letter and expressed his willingness to respect these requirements, but did not receive a reply from SPK the case came to a standstill (ibid., 281 ff.; 313 ff.). Recently, the dialogue on the return of Ngonso' has been resumed: Sylvie Njobati, a Cameroonian cultural worker, activist, and herself a Nso', published the film *Ngonso. A People's Identity in Captivity*. It presents the views of members of the Nso' society on the case.¹⁰⁰ In 2021 Njobati started the social media campaign #BringBackNgonso. By demonstrating outside the Humboldt Forum in Berlin on the occasion of the opening of its first exhibitions in September 2021 she alerted a broader public to the fact that there were long-standing claims to one of the objects on display at the Humboldt Forum (Hafner 20 September 2021). Already before the opening of the Humboldt Forum, Sylvie Njobati had contacted Verena Rodatus, curator of the Western and Southern African collections at the Ethnologisches Museum.¹⁰¹ The museum reacted by inviting Njobati to co-curate a workshop together with Verena Rodatus. In December 2021, the workshop brought together different stakeholders – historians from Cameroon, Cameroonian activists from the diaspora in Berlin and members of the Nso' community, a team of provenance researchers of the SPK, a representative of SPKs administration, members of the embassy of Cameroon as well as the German Lost Art Foundation, and the German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts – to discuss the case to develop a roadmap for further political decisions towards the restitution of the bowl bearer.

Nigeria

At present, the best-known case of requested returns is certainly the case of the bronzes from the Kingdom of Benin in today's Nigeria. Due to the great number of opinions and points of view, there are numerous publications on the subject (see Savoy 2021 for the period 1965–1985; Osa-

99 The request was also supported by scholars of the University of Osnabrück.

100 Together with the filmmaker Marc Eils, Sylvie Njobati is currently working on another documentary film that addresses the debates on this issue (email from Sylvie Njobati to Larissa Förster and Zoe Schoofs on 20 October 2021).

101 We would like to thank Verena Rodatus and Carola Thielecke, head of the Central Legal Office of the SPK, for the exchange on this case.

dolor 2021 with a focus on the last 20 years). Therefore, here is only an attempt to create an overview of the requests for return that have been made vis-à-vis German institutions since the 1970s.¹⁰²

As early as 1972, a request was made by Ekpo Eyos, at the time head of the Federal Department of Antiquities in Nigeria and vice president of ICOM to the West German embassy in Nigeria asking for the permanent loan of bronzes from the SPK.¹⁰³ Hans-Georg Wormit, director of the SPK at the time, rejected the proposal (Savoy 2021, 27 ff.). Savoy concludes that the requests from Nigeria in the 1970s were deliberately delayed in West Germany by the institutions involved, although there were individuals who were open to returns, such as Herbert Ganslmayr, director of the Übersee-Museum in Bremen (Savoy 2021, 55 ff.). In 1976 representatives of the Nigerian government also approached the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart for information concerning bronzes in the museum's collection (Strugalla 12 May 2019).

The exhibition *Benin – Könige und Rituale. Höfische Kunst aus Nigeria*,¹⁰⁴ shown at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna and later at the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin, reignited the discussion about returns in 2007. As one result, the *Benin Dialogue Group* was founded in 2010 by Barbara Plankensteiner, curator of the exhibition and former acting director of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Vienna, together with Nath Mayo Adediran, director of the museum department of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in Lagos. The group was convened as an initiative of representatives with international parties to develop possibilities of return (Osadolor 2021, 216). In August 2019 the Nigerian Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar confirmed that an official request had been resubmitted to the German government in the form of a letter to Chancellor Angela Merkel and Monika Grütters, Minister of State for Cultural Affairs (Sandkühler et al. 2021, 11; Bodenstein 19 February 2020). In April 2021 a meeting was convened between representatives of the German federal state, representatives of the individual German federal states and five major German ethnographic museums. A unified position on the matter was reached and published in a *Statement on the handling of the Benin Bronzes in German museums and institutions*. In this statement, signatories agreed to 'create extensive transparency concerning the Benin Bronzes in their collections and exhibitions', to 'hold further coordinated talks on returns and future cooperation' with Nigeria, and also 'determine concrete actions and a timetable for the upcoming talks' (Aus-

102 The German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts has prepared a list that includes all Benin Bronzes located in German museums, (www.cp3c.de [accessed 21 October 2021]).

103 Ekpo Eyos curated the exhibition *Schätze aus Alt-Nigeria – Erbe von 2000 Jahren* (Treasures from Ancient Nigeria – Heritage of 2000 Years) in the Pergamonmuseum in East Berlin in 1985. Following this exhibition, questions of the return of cultural objects from colonial contexts were discussed in the East German Ministry of Culture. But even though the GDR was generally supportive, no returns took place (Savoy 28 May 2019; 2021, 28).

104 *Benin – Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria*.

wärtiges Amt 30 April 2021).¹⁰⁵ In October 2021 a *Memorandum of Understanding on museum cooperation with Nigeria* was signed in Abuja by Abba Isa Tijani, director general of the NCMM, and Andreas Görgen, director general for Cultural Affairs at the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt 14 October 2021).¹⁰⁶ The memorandum states that:

Both sides affirmed that the process leading to returns of Benin bronzes will begin in the second quarter of 2022 with transfers of ownership. A framework agreement to this end is to be concluded in December 2021. Both sides also agreed that Benin bronzes will continue to be exhibited in German museums and that there will be cooperation on exhibition projects (ibid.).

As a result of these events, the first restitution of Benin bronzes from Germany to Nigeria is planned for 2022 (Die Bundesregierung 29 April 2021).

105 Participants were: Monika Grütters, Hermann Parzinger, Lars-Christian Koch, Theresia Bauer, Minister of Science, Research and the Arts of Land Baden-Württemberg, Inés de Castro, director of the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Carsten Brosda, Senator for Culture and the Media in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Barbara Plankensteiner, director of MARKK in Hamburg and spokesperson of the *Benin Dialogue Group*, Isabel Pfeiffer-Poensgen, Minister of Culture and Science of Land North Rhine-Westphalia, Susanne Laugwitz-Aulbach, head of the Department of Art and Culture of the City of Cologne, Nanette Snoep, director of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, Barbara Klepsch, State Minister for Culture and Tourism in the Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, director of the ethnological museums in Leipzig, Dresden, Herrnhut, Andreas Görgen, director general for Culture and Communication at the Federal Foreign Office, representing Minister of State Michelle Müntefering, Claudia Rose, chair of the Federation-Länder Working Group on dealing with collections from colonial contexts, and Markus Hilgert, head of the Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts in Germany (Auswärtiges Amt 30 April 2021).

106 The German delegation to Nigeria also included Barbara Plankensteiner and Hermann Parzinger (Auswärtiges Amt 14 October 2021).

VI. Concluding Remarks

With this working paper we have shown how the 1970s marked a turning point regarding returns from Germany, involving institutions from both East and West Germany. The aim of the paper has been to unravel suppressed knowledge on objects and remains returned – we have collected all the cases known to us in this paper, but do not claim completeness concerning more than 50 years of returns and requests.

We have not conducted a systematic query among all collecting institutions and individuals in Germany and their engagement with returns or requests for returns. Instead, we started with the returns known to us through literature and came across further cases during our research and in conversation with researchers and museum workers engaged in the subject since the 1970s.

Some returns have been researched intensively and resulted in a great number of publications both academic and popular literature, as well as documentary films. The knowledge of other returns exists only in the institutions or in the memory of the individuals that were involved; some are mentioned only in footnotes of less known publications. With this working paper we hope to enable further research. The multiplicity of actors and institutions involved in returns as well as the different hierarchical levels on which the returns were negotiated and realised gives an impression of the heterogeneity of the field – of the different trigger impulses and motivations, constellations of actors involved, arguments for and against returns and sometimes extensive, sometimes absent, media coverage.

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