

Laufende No. 

# HUMBOLDT FORUM

Gegenstand.



6718.  I/158/98.

Hölzerne Zapfentür, mit einer männlichen Figur.  
170 cm h., 62 cm br.  
Aus der Tembe d. Sultanen v. Buruku  
(vgl. II E 6717)

Act. No. 1119/98  
L. v. Grewert  
Gestrichl.

6719

dergl.  
155 cm h., 61 cm br.

Ebendaser.

6720.

Stuhl von der Form der gerötalischen Hanyam-  
meri-Stühle, aber mit hoher Lehne. Auf der Rück-  
seite der Lehne eine geschnitzte menschliche  
Figur, die mit Kopf und Händen über die Lehne  
hervorragt.  
107 cm h., Dm. des Sitzes 35 cm.

Ebendaser.

6721.

Spiellrett mit 32 Löchern (in 4 Reihen).  
64 cm lg., 39 cm br., 20,5 cm h.

Ebendaser.

6722.

Flasche Speiceschale aus Holz.  
40 cm lg., 27 cm br., 6,5 cm h.

Ebendaser.

6723.

Mtama-Korb.  
25 cm h., 45 cm Dm.

Ebendaser.

# EXHIBITING.

6724.

Stuhl (oder) mit 2a...  
15 cm h., 25,5 cm Dm.

Ebendaser.

# OMISSIONS

6725.

Geflechtener Pombe-Gefäß, dickbauchig, mit  
Kopf...  
Korb zum Fischfang.  
42 cm h., 56,5 cm Dm.

Ebendaser.

6726.

Korb zum Fischfang.  
42 cm h., 56,5 cm Dm.

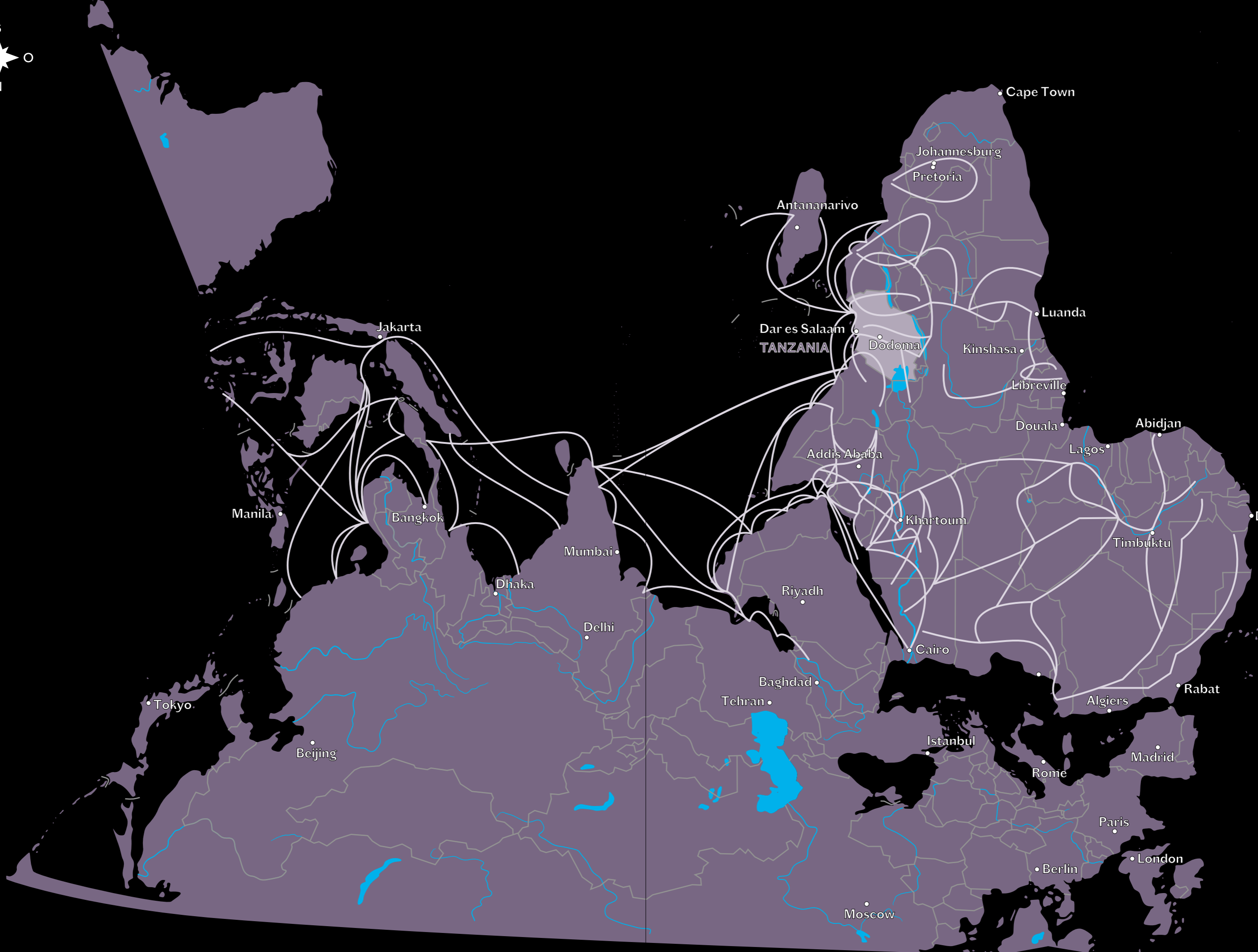
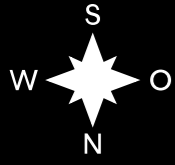
## OBJECTS FROM TANZANIA AND THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE

## A WORKBOOK

6727.

159/98.  
27 cm h.

1211/98.  
Kptm. Ramsey



• Tokyo

• Beijing

• Manila

• Bangkok

• Jakarta

• Dhaka

• Mumbai

• Delhi

• Tehran

• Baghdad

• Riyadh

• Moscow

• Cairo

• Khartoum

• Addis Ababa

• Dar es Salaam  
**TANZANIA**

• Dodoma

• Antananarivo

• Johannesburg

• Pretoria

• Cape Town

• Luanda

• Kinshasa

• Libreville

• Douala

• Lagos

• Abidjan

• Timbuktu

• Dakar

• Rabat

• Algiers

• Istanbul

• Rome

• Madrid

• Paris

• Berlin

• London

This workbook accompanies the temporary exhibition “Exhibiting.Omissions – Objects from Tanzania and the Colonial Archives”, which was shown in the Humboldt Forum from September 2022 to June 2024. The exhibition was created by Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (Foundation Humboldt Forum in the Berlin Palace) in conjunction with the Ethnologisches Museum and the Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Central Archive of the National Museums Berlin - Prussian Cultural Heritage), with funding from the Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien aufgrund eines Beschlusses des Deutschen Bundestages (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media on the basis of a resolution passed by the German Bundestag).

Critical guidance was provided by Josephine Apraku and Vicensia Shule.

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Subject: *Critical companion* for a “Critical examination of the East Africa collection” (WT)

Dear,

We are writing to inform you about the project “Critical examination of the East Africa collection” (working title) currently being planned by the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin (EM), SMB-SPK, and Stiftung Humboldt Forum (SHF). The project, in the form of a participatory workshop, is scheduled to go on display in the east wing of the Humboldt Forum from early 2022 onwards. We are seeking to establish a group of *critical companions* to accompany the exhibition and would like to ask you to take on this role. Before you decide whether you wish to participate as a *critical companion*, we would like to present the project to you in a short online meeting. Could we make an appointment with you for this purpose?

The workshop format will be uncomfortable, posing questions aimed at confronting colonial aphasia. We would like to base our work on the principle of “No Consent – No Object?”. ‘Objects’ will not be exhibited if the Tanzanian descendants of the producers, users, or owners of the ‘objects’, (state) stakeholders, and communities of interest have not given their consent. The colonial archive and the deep-rooted racist narrative about the “appropriation” of the East Africa collection should also be rendered visible.

We would like to get together with you for workshops and discussions that seek to explore how *critical companions* can contribute to exhibition projects. We envision a wide variety of ways in which you could help, such as developing the concept, media production, exhibition design, event programming, critical interventions, educational formats, and workshops. A purely advisory role that would remain invisible to the public is also an option. Your participation in advisory discussions, workshops, event formats, interventions, etc. will be remunerated.

We wish to create a productive and appreciative platform within the Humboldt Forum while avoiding – and/or drawing attention to – all forms of tokenism<sup>2</sup>.

We hope that you will offer your own critical perspectives and would be happy to present the project to you via an online conference or on the phone.

Kind regards,

Paola Ivanov (Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, SMB), Kristin Weber-Sinn (Zentralarchiv, SMB), Jocelyne Stahl, and Maïke Schimanowski (Stiftung Humboldt Forum)

<sup>1</sup> Use of the term “object” does not seem adequate for items whose significance greatly exceeds their status as mere object. Furthermore, the term denotes an artificial distinction between artworks and “objects”/“ethnographica”. Considerations regarding the use of more respectful terminology is ongoing, which is why ‘object’ appears in this work in single quotation marks or has been replaced by phrases such as “cultural belongings”.

# INTRODUCTION

In spring 2021, we – a curatorial team comprising four white<sup>3</sup> women with academic degrees who are employed in museum institutions – contacted experts, members of the diasporas, and activists. Our aim was to invite them to take on the role of *critical companions* who could provide critiques and support the process of creating the exhibition “Exhibiting. Omissions – Objects from Tanzania and the Colonial Archive”.

Although many people reacted positively to our email, most of them declined to participate in the Humboldt Forum project. We were, however, delighted that two of the people we contacted agreed to take up an advisory role for the workshop project “Exhibiting.Omissions” and were also later involved in additional artistic interventions. These included a cinematic impression of the storage facilities accompanied by a sound installation, a short video documentary from the *critical companions*’ perspective, and the workbook which you now hold in your hands.

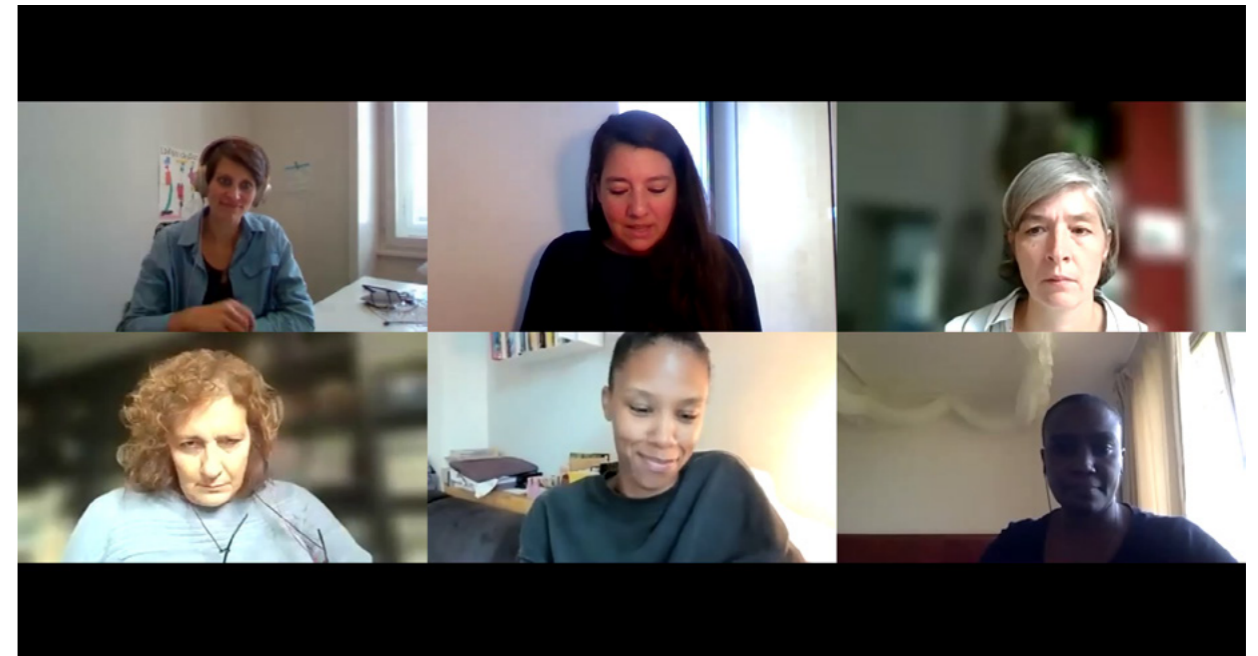


Fig. 1

<sup>2</sup> “Tokenism” is a term used to describe the process in which institutions involve representatives of minoritised groups with the aim of creating the impression that these institutions are diverse and inclusive. In doing so, they often fail to address deep-rooted problems within these institutions such as discrimination. These individuals are invited as “tokens”, and often they neither exert significant influence nor participate in decision making. The positive external image of the institution does not necessarily reflect its internal structures.

<sup>3</sup> White is not a self-imposed term. We wish to make clear that whiteness is a social construct that does not correspond to the laws of nature. White refers to a dominant and privileged position within a racist system (see footnote 4 regarding the use of the term “Black”).

NO CONSENT – NO OBJECT?

A WORKSHOP EXHIBITION

# “NO CONSENT – NO OBJECT?” A WORKSHOP EXHIBITION

How can we open up the storage facilities of ethnological museums today and extract and research – and ultimately exhibit in museums – the ‘objects’ appropriated during the violent era of German colonial rule in the territory of modern-day Tanzania? This was the question that we, as the curatorial team (white, academic employees of Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and Stiftung Humboldt Forum) asked ourselves in the summer of 2020. At the time it was clear that the planned exhibition focusing on “Histories of Tanzania” (working title) in cooperation with the National Museum of Tanzania would have to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. How were we to determine the thematic focus without experts from Tanzania and the diaspora?

We decided to implement a workshop format with space for discussions and changes. In the exhibition “Exhibiting.Omissions”, which ran from September 2022 to June 2024 in Berlin’s Humboldt Forum, we focused on the historically and culturally sensitive ‘objects’ that were stolen, looted, extorted, purchased, or gifted and/or traded within the context of highly unequal power relations. More than 10,200 inventory numbers in the holdings of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin can be traced back to continental Tanzania, and more than 80 percent of these come from the era of German and British colonial rule.

## NO CONSENT

Together with the “acquisition files”, photographs, databases, catalogues, and many other sources of information, these numbers comprise an archive that is neither complete nor objective. In this colonial archive we find examples of colonial ideology and violence: it is marked by ignorance, omissions, racist language, as well as Eurocentric categorizations. This is what we wish to render visible. At the same time, we want to focus on people’s resistance to violent colonial rule in what was then known as “German East Africa”. We were particularly interested in the people and societies from whom these ‘objects’ were stolen.

## NO OBJECT

We did not exhibit sensitive original ‘objects’ for which no consent had been granted by the descendants of their producers, users, guardians, or owners. The “omissions” in the exhibition were marked in pink. In this manner we wished to show that the archive is just as fragmentary and limited as our perspectives regarding this topic. In other words, we wanted to create a space for discussions.



Fig. 2

Critically examining colonial crimes and power structures and highlighting the consequences of a racist ideology that remain with us to this day are core aspects of the Humboldt Forum’s mission. In a building which includes reconstructed sections of the facade of what used to be Berlin’s royal palace, a critical presentation of these ‘objects’ and their histories that can reveal the racism and power structures behind their acquisition is both difficult and essential. As a site, the historical palace symbolized the Prussian monarchy and was closely connected to militarism, colonialism, and the repression of democratic movements.

As a curatorial team of white individuals who were socialized in Europe and unaffected by racism, we ran the risk of the exhibition repeating the internalized patterns of thought that come from a racist system. Consequently, we sought additional support for the planning stage, and two experts from Dar es Salaam and Berlin agreed to help.

## HOW CAN AN EXHIBITION BE DESIGNED IN WHICH THE MUSEUM'S 'COLLECTION' IS CENTRAL BUT NOT ON DISPLAY?

By Szandra Tebbe (Studio Ra)

There were many questions at the beginning of the design process. In order to develop a sensitive, creative language, we as designers wanted to understand the context of the future workshop exhibition.

## HOW MUCH DO VISITORS TO THE HUMBOLDT FORUM KNOW ABOUT GERMAN COLONIALISM? HOW MUCH DO VISITORS KNOW ABOUT TANZANIA? WHAT DO THE OTHER EXHIBITION ROOMS OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM IN THE 'AFRICA' SECTION LOOK LIKE?

Taking part in the process of creating the exhibition also meant discovering a personal omission: What do we, the designers, know about German colonialism in Tanzania? When we discussed this in 2020, at the beginning of the collaboration, we became aware that we knew shockingly little. We assumed that this could also apply to most visitors to the Humboldt Forum.

Participation was an important tool for us in designing the exhibition. In terms of design, this meant that knowledge should not be conveyed passively, but actively. Visitors should be involved in the development process of the workshop, in the continuous dialogue with the empty spaces. With the help of these new insights, we hoped that they would be able to feel their own omissions and develop positions.

One example was the exploration of the topic colonial photography: in a walk-in installation, several rows of fabric panels were set up and illuminated with a photograph on the front. Visitors entered the installation by walking through the projection and became part of the fragmentation of the image. A great deal of contextualising information about the motif was provided on the back of the panels. The intention was to encourage self-questioning and reflection through sensory experiences.

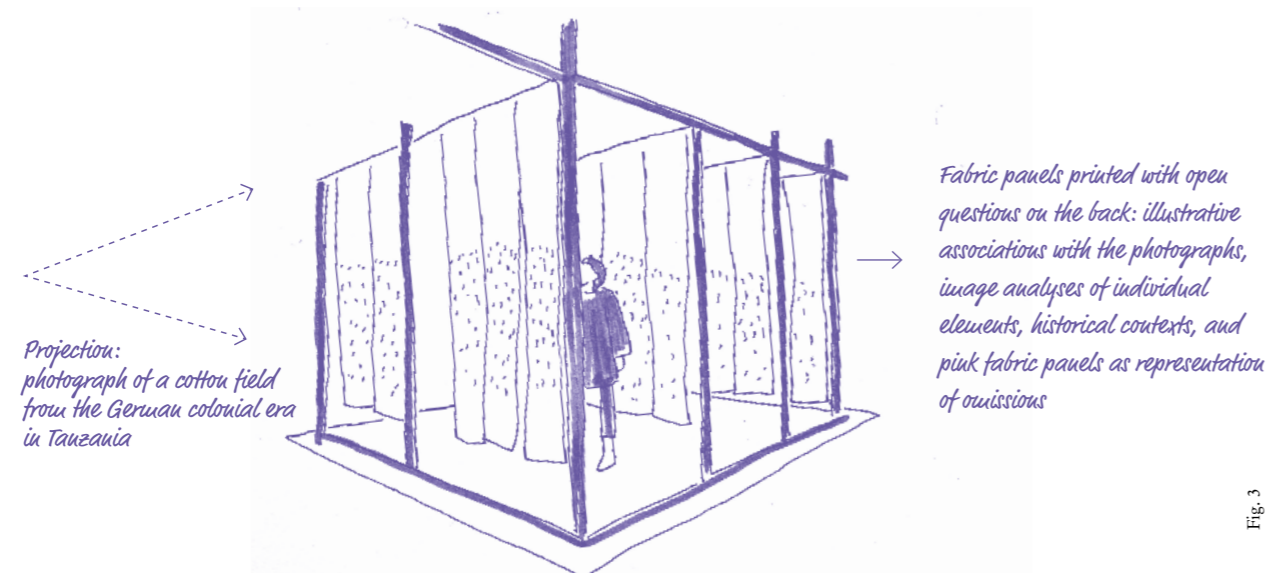


Fig. 3

## HOW CAN WE TRY TO DECOLONISE OUR OWN GAZE?

The concept "No Consent - No Object?" challenged conventional ways of looking at things. The examination of the provenance of the 'objects' also included a critical look at the 'classical' museum presentation. The usual presentation style in Western museums is rather distanced and emphasises the aura of a work or 'object'. This supports a narrative that is mainly orientated towards the Western view of 'objects'. The design does not deal with the individual characteristics of the 'objects', nor with the fact that the 'objects' were never made for a museum or a display case. It almost seems as if this kind of design was made for admiring the 'objects' without prior knowledge.

With this in mind, we decided to deconstruct the usual museum presentation in display cases in order to better reflect the complexity of the 'objects'. The 'object signs', which are otherwise intended to provide a summary as brief as possible and are positioned inconspicuously in terms of design, should look like interventions 'pushed into' the glass of the display case. They should be present and numerous and, through their quantity, enable different perspectives on the 'object' and emphasise that the 'objects' of the 'collection' carry complex stories within them. The name of the 'collectors' or the information on material and size represented only one of these levels or perspectives.

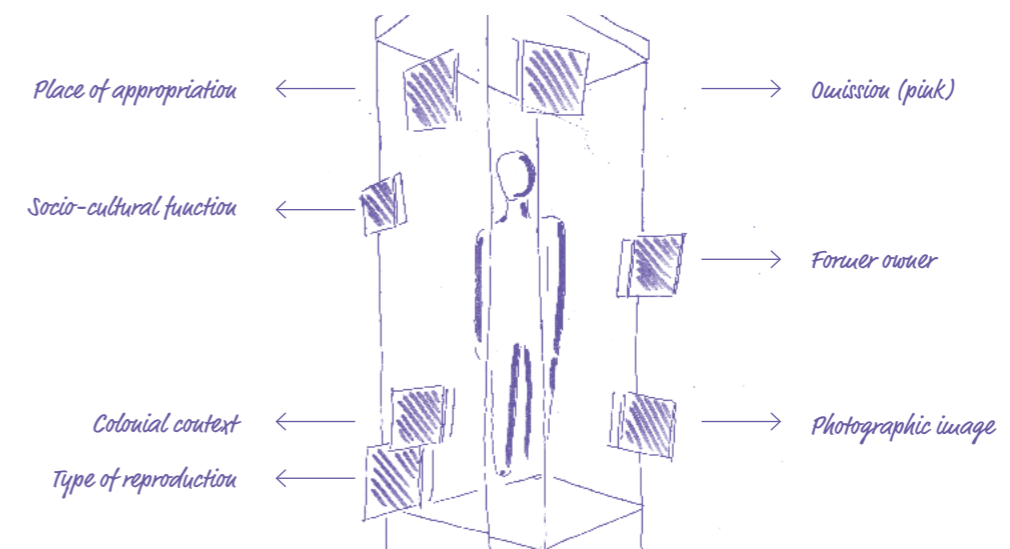


Fig. 4

## WHAT ROLE DOES COLOUR PLAY IN THE COMMUNICATION OF CURATORIAL CONCEPTS?

The curatorial concepts and questions were highlighted by colour coding or underlined in the text. The main purpose of these markings was to make the decolonisation visible and to draw the attention of the visitors to such connections: The statement "No Consent - No Object?" was marked by the colour green and staged right at the beginning of the exhibition with an empty display case. Passages and contexts that describe the many omissions created by violence, ignorance and a lack of information were underlined in pink in the texts. In addition, various forms of creative expression were experimented with, in order to retell omissions: through open questions, illustrations, large pink-coloured surfaces in the room, reflections and creative reproductions of the original 'objects'.

# HISTORIES/S

## EXCHANGE, ENTANGLEMENTS



Fig. 5

“Two days’ sail beyond, there lies the very last market town of the continent of Azania, which is called Rhapta; which has its name from the sewed boats (rhaptôn ploiariôn) already mentioned; in which there is ivory in great quantity, and tortoise-shell.”

*The Periplus Of The Erythraean Sea, Travel And Trade In The Indian Ocean By A Merchant Of The First Century, translated from the Greek and annotated by Wilfred H. Schoff, New York: 1912*

The people living on the coast of East Africa have been using trade routes across the Indian Ocean since the first century AD. Glass beads, coins, and ceramics attest to centuries of trade with the Mediterranean basin, India, South-East Asia, China, and the Arabian peninsula. Trade was also what connected the coastal inhabitants with the societies of the interior as far as the Kingdom of Great Zimbabwe and Mapungubwe (South Africa).

Along the coast and on islands off the coast, markets and towns were established. Rhapta, the settlement mentioned in the quote, was probably located in what is today Tanzania or Kenya and was visited by traders from southern Arabia. One of the commodities exported from Rhapta was ivory. Ibn Battūta, a fourteenth-century traveller from North

Africa, described the trading city of Kilwa (see fig. 5) in southern Tanzania as one of the most beautiful and elegant of all.

From the late fifteenth century onwards Portuguese traders and seafarers tried to control trade by force. They built forts and bombarded and plundered the coastal towns. About two hundred years later, the rulers of Oman drove out the Portuguese and claimed sovereignty over the coastal region –with the exception of the territory of what is today Mozambique. In 1840 they transferred their capital city to the island of Zanzibar. In the interior, however, their influence remained relatively weak.

## DIVERSITY OF SOCIETIES

Today, Tanzania is home to over 120 population groups. Alongside Kiswahili and English, the two official languages, many other languages are spoken in the country. The society of the Swahili (“people of the coast”) brought together people and ideas from the populations of East Africa and the Indian Ocean. The broad cultural exchange is reflected in clothing, architecture, food, languages, and the Islamic faith, to give only a few examples. On the mainland of modern Tanzania there were numerous forms of social organisation, from

kingdoms in the north-west to societies that rejected political leaders, hierarchies, and centralised forms of control.

The history of East African societies has many more facets than the current borders of the modern state of Tanzania might suggest. Many Euro-American written sources from the colonial and immediate post-colonial contexts focus on the coastal regions. Oral history and archaeological findings, however, reveal a more complex picture of the histories and structures of East African societies.

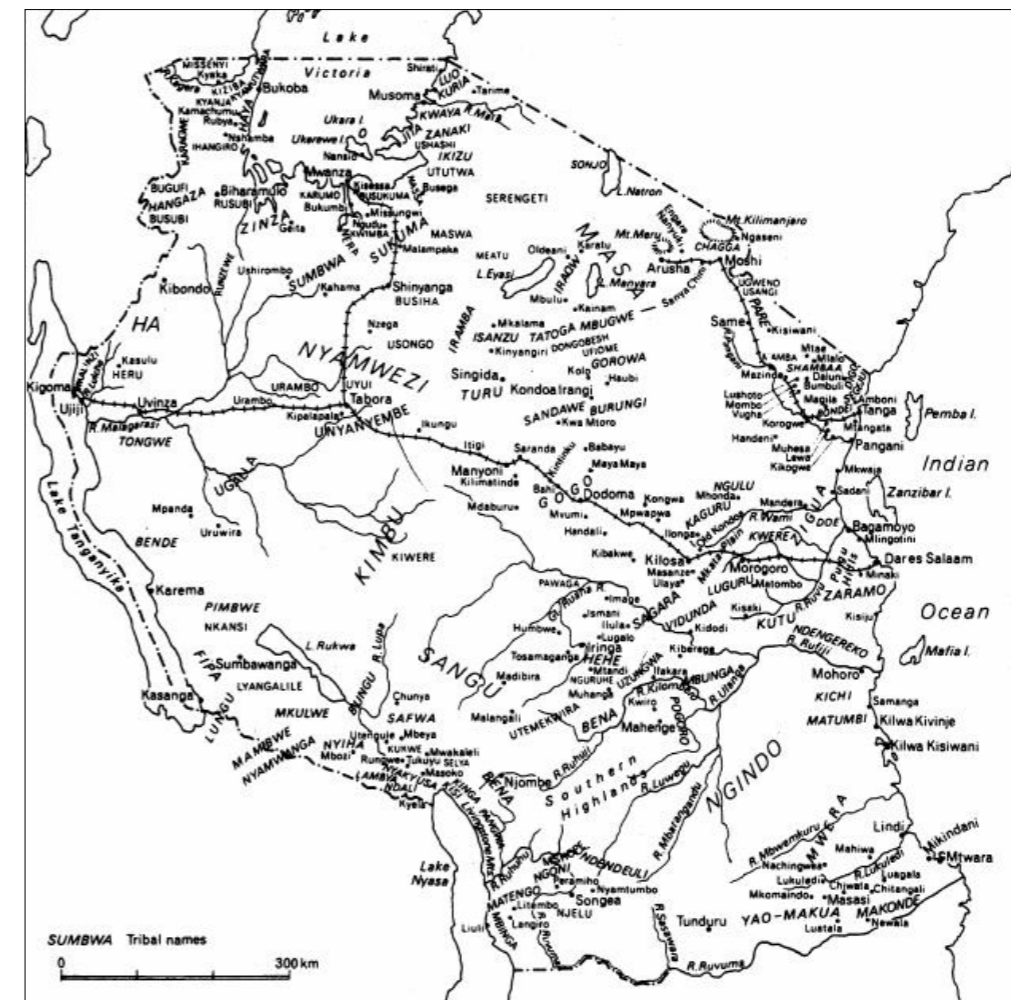


Fig. 6

“Until recently the history of East Africa before 1800 has been presented as the history of the coastal city states and their connection with the Indian Ocean trade. In Tanzania, the main concentration has been on Kilwa and Zanzibar. This has not been so because the interior was uninhabited, but because historians were only looking for written records and the coastal region happened to have a few of these either in the form of chronicles or records of travellers who visited the coast during this early period.”

Isaria N. Kimambo. *The Interior before 1800*. In: Kimambo, Isaria N., Temo, Arnold J. (Hg.), *A History of Tanzania*, Nairobi 1969



Fig. 7

“Capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it. [...] All capitalism is racial from its beginning [...] and it will continue to depend on racial practice and racial hierarchy no matter what.”

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Professor of Earth & Environmental Studies and American Studies, City University of New York, from Geographies of Racial Capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore, An Antipode Foundation film, directed by Kenton Card, <https://antipodeonline.org/geographies-of-racial-capitalism/2020>, Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

The societies of the East African mainland became more deeply involved in the capitalist world economy through long-distance trade during the nineteenth century. Trade routes ran from the coast to Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika, to Lake Nyassa, and through the (historical) Kingdom of Buganda to the Congo. Ivory was the main export and it was transported to the coast by tens of thousands of carriers, some of whom were enslaved. Slavery reached its peak during the nineteenth century. Enslaved people on Zanzibar, for example, were forced to produce cloves for the world market.

Cotton fabrics were important imports in East Africa. Starting in the 1880s, guns too became very significant, with 100,000 fire-

arms being imported every year. Within a short time East Africa experienced far-reaching economic, political, social, and cultural changes. Large political units came into being in which wealth and military power formed the basis for political influence. The Nyamwezi are one example of this development. Older traditions of social organisation, such as inherited and ritual authority, were questioned with increasing frequency.

During this period, European travellers, researchers, and missionaries followed the trade routes and tried to adapt local and regional transport and supply routes to their own purposes. These actors can be regarded as enablers of colonisation.

The process of European colonisation in the form of slavery, land-grabbing, and the exploitation of resources began five hundred years ago. These developments culminated in the Berlin Africa Conference (1884/85), where it was mostly European diplomats and politicians who laid down the rules for the division of Africa. In the decades that followed the borders of the territories occupied by the colonials were fixed, colonial rule was asserted by force, and colonial administrative states were established. One of the areas claimed by the German Empire was the territory of modern mainland Tanzania.

From the very beginning, the people of East Africa resisted the claim to power that the German military tried to assert by violence from the late 1880s onwards. Military campaigns, armed “expeditions”, despotism, forced labour, and the compulsory payment of taxes to the colonial administration were the

hallmarks of their rule with the aim of economically exploiting the people and their resources. The Germans responded to resistance from the East African population with extreme violence.

The people in the southern half of modern Tanzania resisted the Germans in the Maji Maji War (1905–1907), in which an estimated 300,000 East Africans were either killed or died as a result of the deliberate destruction of their livelihood.

In the fight against British troops during World War I, the German military – with their African troops – turned East Africa into a battlefield. Hundred of thousands of East Africans lost their lives. After the defeat of Germany, the territory of today’s mainland Tanzania was placed under de facto British rule as a mandated territory of the League of Nations and was called Tanganyika.



Fig. 8

“I have no relationship to you and I can’t remember you giving me a pesa or a quarter-pesa or a needle or some thread. I am looking for a reason why I should obey you, and I can’t find the slightest one. If it’s only about friendship, I have no objection, now or ever, but I am incapable of being subservient to you [...]”.

Machemba bin Mshame Masaninga to Hermann von Wissmann, governor of “German East Africa”; document undated (presumably 1890 or 1891) and translated into German, Bundesarchiv R 1001/473

## IDEA OF NATION, INDEPENDENCE

“I am telling you that we want independence. And we can’t get independence if you don’t want to join the party. We have given birth to all these men. Women are the power in this world.”

Bibi Titi Mohamed addressing women of the *bombakusema* group, around 1955 (?), Dar es Salaam. Quoted from: Susan Geiger, *TANU Women. Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955–1965*, Portsmouth N. H., 1997

“The people fought because they did not believe in the white man’s right to govern and civilize the black. They rose in a great rebellion not through fear of a terrorist movement or a superstitious oath, but in response to a natural call, a call of the spirit, ringing in the hearts of all men, and of all times, educated or uneducated, to rebel against foreign domination.”

Julius K. Nyerere, „Statement to the U.N. Fourth Committee, 1956“, in: J. K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, Dar es Salaam, 1966

An independence movement was formed in what was then Tanganyika during the 1950s: the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). Its president was Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Other politicians too, such as Bibi Titi Mohammed, inspired people with the idea of independence from the British occupation. Their motto was *Uhuru na Umoja* (Freedom and Unity). Tanganyika became independent in December 1961 and fused with Zanzibar to become Tanzania in 1964.

The goal they aspired to was *ujamaa* (familyhood), a concept of African socialism. This included abolishing exploitative structures and nationalising the means of production in a society characterised by democracy and solidarity. These goals were sometimes implemented coercively and against the wishes of the population. The politicians believed that the basis of African socialism was rooted in pre-colonial societies.

A one-party system was established in Tanzania that was not abolished until 1992. In response to pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Tanzanian government had abandoned its ideal of social, economic, and political equality in the 1980s in favour of a neo-liberal economic order.

## MY NOTES

Grid of dotted lines for notes.

SIT IN DISCOMFORT

„No Consent – No Object?“

The motto of the exhibition, Berlin, 15. 9. 2022

This display case is empty. Concerning most of the ‘objects’ from Tanzania held by the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin we are not sure whether there is consent for presenting them in an exhibition. But who is in a position to give permission or consent? This question serves as the point of departure for the workshop exhibition. For this reason, we decided not to exhibit original ‘objects’ unless we have consent to do so.



Fig. 9

Objects located in the Ethnological Museum Berlin with a geographical reference to Tanzania by year of acquisition

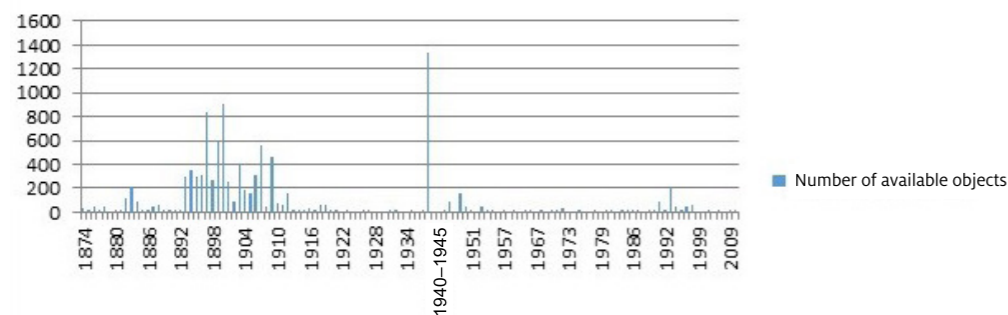


Fig. 10

The graph shows how most of the cultural belongings from modern-day Tanzania were appropriated during the periods of German colonial expansion (beginning in the 1880s) and colonial rule (1885–1919) and sent to the former Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde – the royal ethnological museum – in Berlin (c. 7,000 inventory numbers). In the 1930s, during British colonial rule, the staunch Nazi and colonial revisionist Ludwig Kohl-Larsen appropriated over 1,300 ‘objects’ which he sent to the museum in Berlin. There are now c. 10,232 inventory numbers in the Ethnologisches Museum’s database that refer to ‘objects’ from modern-day continental Tanzania.

Heart of Darkness – Heart of Europe

The Heart of Darkness is located in the same place as the heart of Europe: buried deep, deep down under layers of rock. It can be found beneath the walls, at the end of winding corridors, behind heavy doors. A place where it is hard to breathe. A tomb in which living things, in which histories were buried. In display cases, behind glass, grouped into categories that are a testament to ignorance, narratives that are not white are held hostage.

Josephine Apraku, 2022



Fig. 11 – 16

This artistic intervention is based on an idea by the *critical companions* and the team of curators.

Realised by:  
 Josephine Apraku: art director, director  
 David Buchholz: director of photography, assistant director, editor, producer  
 Vincent Engel: gaffer  
 Simone Nowicki: foley artist  
 © Apraku, Buchholz, Nowicki, 2022  
 A video production by tellsomemore production

# COLONIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography was a mighty weapon in the hands of the colonisers. German ruling practices in East Africa are a case in point. Photography was used to create images of self and other and to justify colonial exploitation and violence. As a general rule, the images were stereotypical and racist. Black people were often portrayed in degrading ways and photographed against their will. For example, they were shown carrying white people or photographed in chains. In contrast, white people often presented themselves as powerful and superior.

Landscapes were frequently depicted as being devoid of people, creating the erroneous impression that the resources which the German Empire wanted to exploit were not being used by the population and that the land was lying fallow. The images, which were used as propaganda in Germany, still shape today's ideas about Black and white people and our ideas about societies in Tanzania and on the African continent as a whole.

**WE OFTEN ASSUME THAT PHOTOGRAPHY REFLECTS "REALITY".  
BUT IT ONLY EVER SHOWS CONSTRUCTED IMAGES OF REALITY.**

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Fig. 17

**WHAT WAS THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S PURPOSE IN TAKING THIS PICTURE?**

**WHAT DO YOU SEE?**

<sup>4</sup> Black is a self-designation and is therefore always capitalised ("Black"). It does not describe a skin colour, but a social position. The term "Black person" is an empowering departure from many racist terms.



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Fig. 18

## WHAT CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT THIS PICTURE, THESE PEOPLE, THESE PLACES?

The photo is categorised as follows in the database of the Ethnologisches Museum: nature photography (plants, vegetation)/group photo (people)/scenery, activities.

It was taken on a cotton plantation near Saadani in northeastern Tanzania. The photographer's name is not mentioned. The picture was probably taken during a visit by the banker and secretary of state at the so-called "Reichskolonialamt" (Imperial Colonial Office), Bernhard Dernburg, in 1907, and was presumably part of a series documenting the use of the steam plough on "German" plantations. Located on the Indian Ocean to the north of Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo, Saadani was an important trading centre in north-eastern Tanzania at the time. Today it has approximately 800 residents and is not far from the Saadani National Park. A number of ruins testify to its important history.

## WHY IS THE MOTIF SIGNIFICANT? WHY DID THE PHOTOGRAPHER WANT TO TAKE THIS PICTURE IN PARTICULAR?

Together with rubber, ivory and sisal, water-intensive cotton farming was intended to improve the trade balance of the German colonies in "German East Africa". These activities were based on the exploitation of people and resources. Photographs such as these were used to advertise the colonies as profitable for the German economy and as a market for German products, agricultural implements and cargo shipping.

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Photographs portraying agricultural wealth were made for this purpose, creating the impression that the affected regions were uninhabited and unfarmed. The target audience was German industrialists and political decision-makers, while the German public too was to be convinced of the value of the "colonial project".

## WHO IS SHOWN IN THE PICTURE? WHAT ARE THEY DOING? WERE THEY ASKED FOR THEIR CONSENT?

While private companies benefited from the colonies, they were a loss-maker for the state budget of the German Empire, and the hoped-for profits did not materialise. The colonial government of "German East Africa" adopted two measures to force the population to work in the fields: firstly, a tax was levied on every house which could be paid in the form of labour.

The East Africans resisted. By refusing to work they caused delays, the tax was tightened: from 1905 onwards, every adult man had to perform a certain amount of labour or pay the equivalent in money. As a result, the people increasingly had less time to work in their own fields.

This photograph showed the German public that the colony of "German East Africa" offered both cultivable land and "cheap" labour.

## WHICH SUPPRESSED AND IGNORED STORIES ARE CONCEALED HERE? WHAT REMAINS INVISIBLE?



Fig. 19

The people who lived in the territory of modern Tanzania resisted German colonial rule and exploitation from the beginning. A new form of resistance arose in the south of Tanzania in 1905, when several communities came together for the first time across the boundaries of their political areas. The Maji Maji War began when people destroyed a "German" cotton field in Nandete (in the south of modern Tanzania) to protest against the exploitative tax system. Motivated by prophetic calls to resistance and by the concept of a protective medicine – *maji* or water – armed forces went to war in southern Tanzania against the German colonial power.

This photo of a cotton field with workers (taken in 1907) dates from the period when the German colonial army crushed the resistance fighters with extreme brutality and pursued a scorched earth policy. Approximately 300,000 people were killed or died as a consequence of the deliberate destruction of their livelihood.

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Colonial photographs were created in a context of injustice. The individuals appearing in them were generally not asked if they wished to be photographed, and they are often depicted in a degrading manner. The photographs served the interests of those in power, which is why a sensitive approach to these historical photographs is now important. In the exhibition, the image of a cotton field was projected onto several panels of fabric (see fig. 18). This resulted in fragmentation, the complete photograph could not be seen as such. Not only did visitors cast a shadow on the photograph depending on where they were positioned, they were also able to move through the installation. This fragmentation and the opportunity to interact with the work served to negate the potency of this historical photograph while focusing on the context in which it was made.

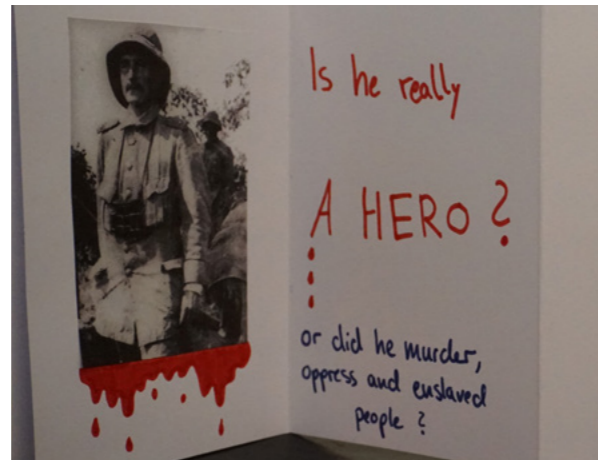


Fig. 20 - 23

### QUESTIONING AND CREATING IMAGES (OF THE WORLD)

What do photographs of a “safari” have to do with colonialism? During the era of colonial rule, photographs were an important instrument used by authorities. For example, Black people were often depicted naked in a manner that demeaned them, while white people were often shown in dominant poses. For propaganda purposes, landscapes were often depicted as being empty of people and rich in resources.

To this day, the colonial gaze as reflected in art and media such as photographs, magazines, or films continues to shape our view of the world. The workshop “World(Images): Reading Colonial Photographs” addressed and examined how the colonial gaze still influences contemporary photography and magazines.

In the workshop, groups of students created “zines”, a small foldable magazine. Using collage techniques, they used historical and contemporary photographs to create new visual worlds that permit a critical view of colonialism and colonial photography. The zines they created were incorporated into the exhibition after each workshop, resulting over time in an entire shelf full of these documents highlighting young people’s perspectives.

### MY NOTES

A large grid of green dots on a white background, intended for taking notes.

## METHOD: CRITICAL IMAGINATION

On a light table in the exhibition, visitors were able to look at the colonial photograph "Unter den Akazien" (Under the Acacia Trees) and lay various transparencies over the picture, highlighting the fact that a photograph always depicts just one point of view that has been consciously selected by the photographer. Visitors were encouraged to question aspects of what was being shown, such as the photographer's intentions in creating the image. They were also prompted to imagine what could have been left out of the picture. For example, what might be hidden beyond the edge of the photograph or behind the photographer?



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

## MY NOTES

WHAT DOES THE STREET BEHIND THE PHOTOGRAPHER LOOK LIKE?

DID THE PEOPLE KNOW THEY WERE BEING PHOTOGRAPHED?

WHAT FLAG CAN BE SEEN IN THE PICTURE?

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

ARCHIVE

# COLONIAL ARCHIVES AND THE BLANKS IN THEM

Archives are repositories for testimonies of the past. The selection of material and the way it is organised reflect, among others, particular worldviews and power interests. With the 'objects' it holds and all the written information about them, a museum too is a kind of archive. But who decides which stories are remembered and which are ignored? Which archives are recognised in Europe and which are considered irrelevant? Museums are reflections of the colonial and racist world order of the nineteenth century. 'Objects' of European "art" and "history" were collected in specific museums. In contrast, art and cultural 'objects' from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Oceania and Australia were degraded to "ethnographica" and their societies of origin discredited as "without art" and "without history".

The Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (Royal Museum for Ethnology), which opened in 1886, sought to acquire and classify as many artefacts as possible. To this end, museum employees established networks with museums all over the world and maintained special relationships with members of the military, settlers, missionaries and scientists in the colonised regions. A Federal Council (Bundesrat) resolution of 1889 designated the museum as the central "collection point" for "ethnographic objects" from the colonies. The Berlin ethnologists even condoned the use of violence (theft, blackmail, acts of war etc.) in the acquisition of 'objects'. However, the collecting mania meant that the museum was soon overwhelmed by the task of managing and archiving its holdings. Not all the 'objects' appropriated by German colonial troops found their way into a museum.

Hundreds of military campaigns claimed innumerable human lives. The colonial troops looted cattle and ivory and destroyed homes and fields. When the Germans had to surrender "German East Africa" after World War I, they destroyed some of the archives of the colonial administration, which also contained papers confiscated from local leaders.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Army transported parts of the so-called collection of the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde to the Soviet Union. A large proportion of the 'objects' was returned to Berlin after the fall of the Berlin wall. Other items belonging to the "collection" – such as the index cards for the African 'objects' – were destroyed during the war. Significant 'objects' recorded in the museum's inventories remain unaccounted for and are regarded as "missing" today.

## WHAT WAS NOT "COLLECTED"?

Although the holdings of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin claim to represent "traditional" cultures, what they actually do is reproduce the false European, colonialist and racist image of ahistorical and unchangeable societies. Things that did not fit this stereotype were not included in the museum holdings. East Africa has participated in the capitalist world market since the nineteenth century, importing numerous goods from Asia, Europe and America, including textiles, clothing, copper and brass wire and glass beads. Luxury goods like French mirrors and champagne were also common. Most importantly, innumerable firearms were imported from Europe. For a considerable time, the long-standing transregional and global links maintained by African societies were denied and made invisible by European historiography and the "collecting" policies of the museums.

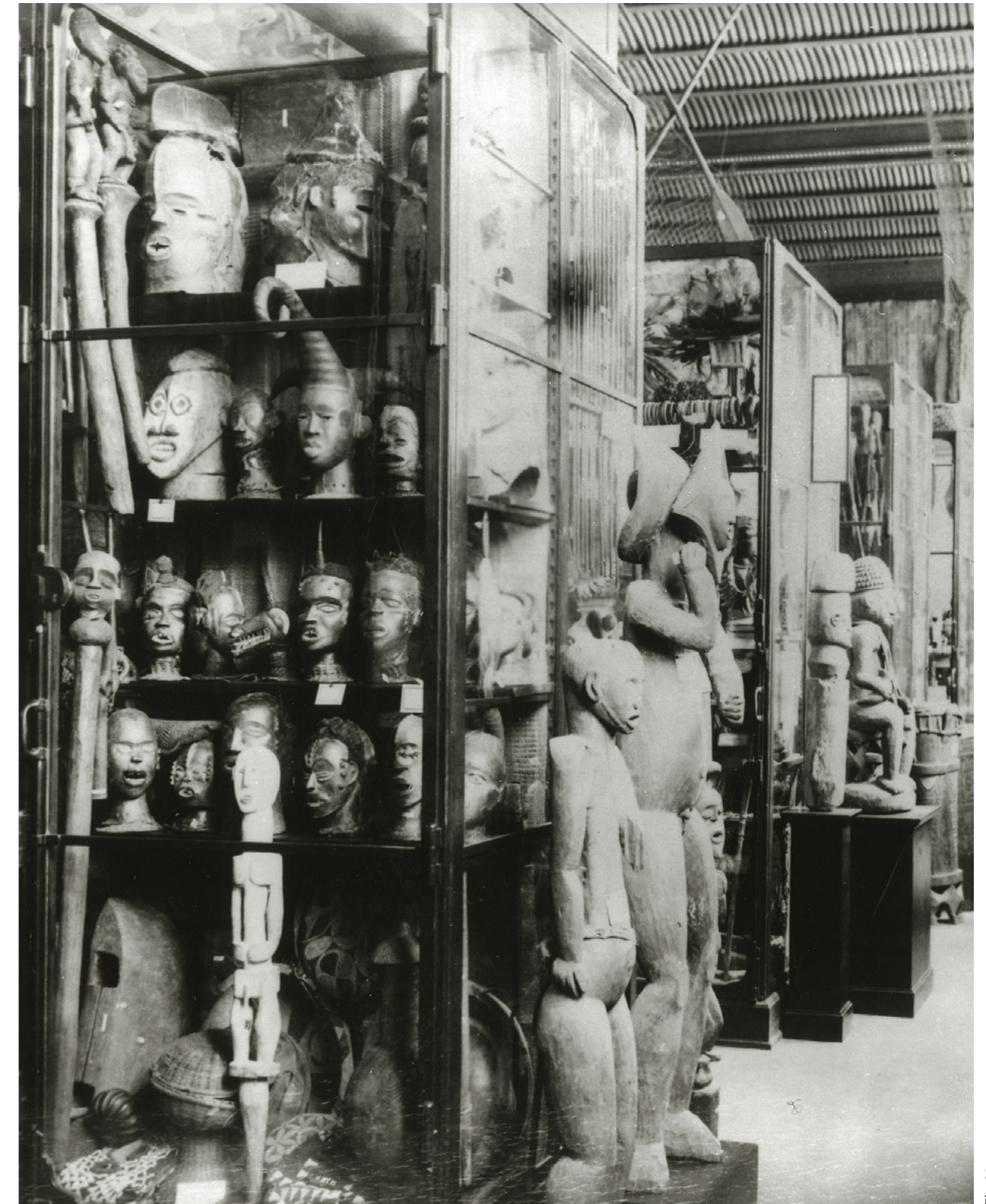


Fig. 26

At the start of the colonial expansion, East African actors like ruler Mirambo, the owner of this pipe, were far more powerful than colonial actors like Hermann von Wissmann, who were fond of overestimating their own importance. Wissmann and his entourage had no resources at all when they first met Mirambo in the early 1880s. The ruler helped them with money and goods for barter. As a sign of his favour, Mirambo gave Wissmann this pipe.

Mirambo's generous gifts, which also helped Wissmann out of an "embarrassing situation", testify to the self-assured attitude of a benefactor which he assumed towards Wissmann. Only the pipe bowl, but not Mirambo's champagne bottles or rifles, ended up in the possession of the museum in Berlin. Mirambo's far-reaching trade relations were rendered invisible by the selective appropriation by the Berlin ethnologists, and with them contemporary and historical transregional and global interdependencies of African societies.

Mtyela Kasanda, also known as Mirambo (c. 1840–1884), was a notable ruler of the Nyamwezi. His title was ntemi. He ruled over a large territory stretching from Lake Victoria through modern central Tanzania to Lake Tanganyika. He also controlled several trade routes and consolidated his influence through profitable trade, primarily in ivory. Mirambo purchased firearms, ammunition and other goods. His armed retinue – the feared *ruga-ruga* – secured his power.

Hermann von Wissmann (1853–1905) was a member of the German military. He produced maps of African regions for European rulers, recruited African soldiers and established a colonial army under German command with which he attempted to forcibly assert the claims of the German Empire's political and economic elites to power in East Africa. The societies there offered fierce resistance. Wissmann was also the so-called governor of "German East Africa" in 1895/96.

"Mirambo had given me a handsome heifer and two bottles of champagne, Pomery & Greno if I am not mistaken, as welcoming gifts. [...] My people complained to me that they could buy nothing here for the beads they had received, since the people wanted cloth. As I had no fabric, I told Mirambo of my embarrassment. He immediately sent to his house and had four bolts of cloth of 40 ells each brought and handed to me. I asked whether I could pay him the amount of c. 32 dollars in Tabora, but he said that he had no connections there or anywhere else and asked me to accept his small gift. He also added arrows, bows and spears from his weapons factory and a pipe prepared by himself with a bowl carved of soapstone, which is found north of here."

Hermann von Wissmann. *Unter deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika von West nach Ost*, Berlin, 1889

"To try to reciprocate for the many gifts and tokens of friendship I had received here, I offered Mirambo a rifle which Pogge had left me. Mirambo told me that he did not wish me to believe he had helped me with a few trifles in expectation of a gift in return, but that he would accept the gun as a sign of friendship."

Hermann von Wissmann. *Unter deutscher Flagge quer durch Afrika von West nach Ost*, Berlin, 1889

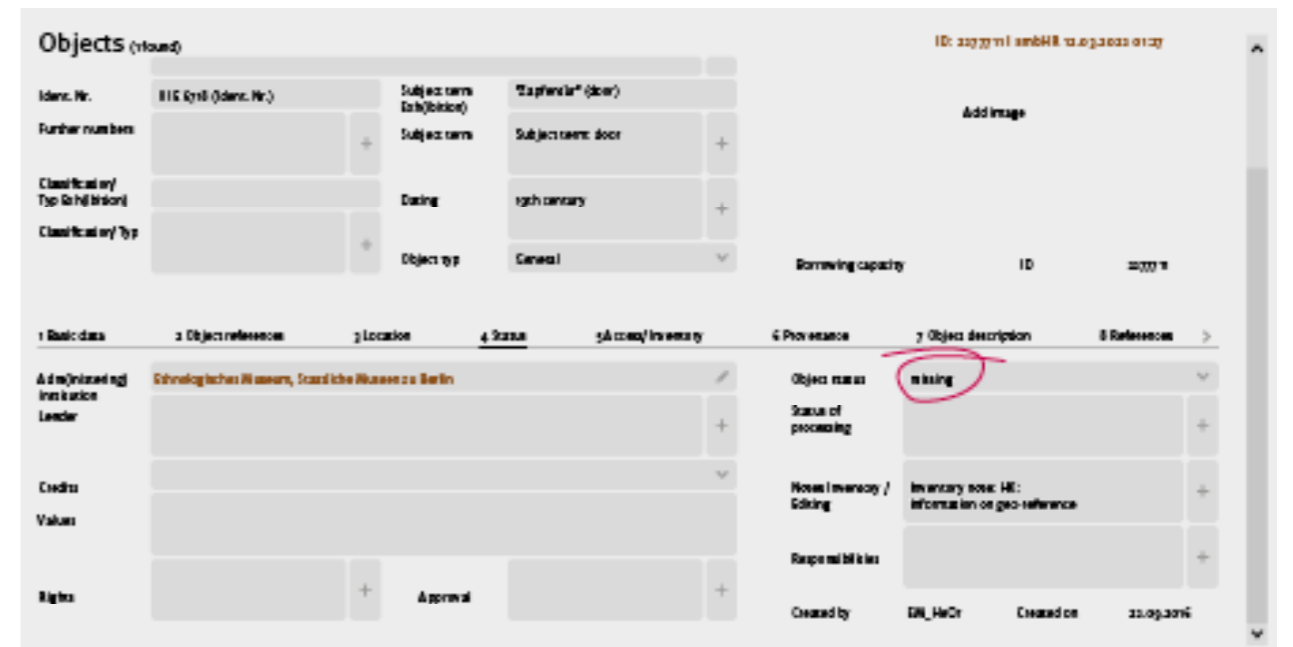


Fig. 27

## HOW CAN A "MISSING" 'OBJECT' BE RETURNED?

### MY NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of approximately 20 rows and 40 columns of dots.


**Ethnologisches Museum**  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

**Object description**  
**Tobacco pipe bowl**

**Identification number**  
**III E 1564**

**Title**  
**242.2.6.1.2. Fire arms**

**Exhibition section**  
**242.2.6.1.2. Fire arms**



**Geographical reference**  
Tanzania  
Historical data (main catalogue) **Unyamwesi** (Unyamwezi)

**Individuals/Public bodies**  
**Collector:** Hermann von Wissmann (4.9.1853 - 15.6.1905)  
**Previous owner:** Mirambo (Mytela Kasanda) (ca. 1840 - 1884)

**Measurements**  
11,2 x 14 x 5,8 cm  
< 2 kg

**Material/Technology**  
Material: stone (soapstone)

**Condition**  
1. uncritical/good (03.03.2015)

**Short description**  
**Short description: main catalogue:**  
**" tobacco=pipe bowl made of stone by Mirambo. Unyamwezi. 14 cm long "**

**Description**  
**Shape: Slim conical pipe bowl with wide funnel-shaped rim. Sharp knee.**  
**Pipe nozzle with flat beaded shoulder (as with bamboo)**  
**Pattern: partial line**  
**Color: Pastel green**  
**Conservation status: small fragments missing**

**Classification**  
.....

**Other number**  
Collector no.: 131

**Previous owner**  
.....

**Date of acquisition**  
**1883**

**Remarks**  
.....

HK checked [HeOr], geo reference checked [PI]

Fig. 28

How long does it take to translate the exclusively German details of more than one million object numbers in the Ethnological Museum's database into English or other languages?  
*Alle*

What did Mirambo call the pipe? What was the object called in the Nyamwezi language?  
*Kristin*

Which categories have been ignored or forgotten here?  
*Jocelyne*

Usually no names of East Africans are mentioned. Why is Mirambo mentioned here?  
*Paola*

Was the object used? How important was the pipe for Mirambo? For whom is the exact description of the outward appearances helpful?  
*Jocelyne*

**METHOD:**  
**"READING AGAINST THE GRAIN AND BETWEEN THE LINES"**

Who decides how history is told, facts are remembered, and perspectives are rendered visible? The people who create archives are the ones who control the narrative. The words and categories appearing in the database, terms such as "previous owner" and "collector" are not neutral, which also makes them problematic. Information about the significance and function of the cultural belongings is often missing. Moreover, we do not know how East Africans interpreted the appropriation by colonizing Europeans. The information in the museum database is riddled with omissions, Eurocentric categories, and even factual mistakes. In order to offer a sensitive reading of the archive that goes "against the grain" and looks "between the lines", some of the information presented in the exhibition is highlighted in pink. A factsheet typical of those found in museums – here the one focusing on the "tobacco pipe bowl" (see fig. 28) – is embellished with speech balloons that raise questions: What does a "collector" actually do? Is the stipulated location correct? What categories were ignored or forgotten? Who decides how the 'objects' are categorized?

The *Exhibiting.Omissions* exhibition contained various interactive elements, one of which was a “string diagram”. It invited visitors to take a closer look at the “everyday” archives and to thread a string along a number of potential answers. What are archives? What archives do you come into contact with?

1. Take a pen.
2. Begin at the starting point.
3. From left to right:  
Read the questions, choose from the possible answers and draw a line along the answers.

42

STARTING POINT



I AM ... YEARS OLD.

- Over 75
- 71–75
- 66–70
- 61–65
- 56–60
- 51–55
- 46–50
- 41–45
- 36–40
- 31–35
- 26–30
- 21–25
- 16–20
- 11–15
- Under 10

I HAVE ALREADY VISITED THE HUMBOLDT FORUM.

- Yes
- No

VARIOUS ARCHIVES CAN BE USED DIFFERENTLY. I MOSTLY LIKE ...

- writing & reading diaries
- reading in the library
- talking to parents/grandparents/elders
- surfing the internet
- reading databases and documents
- listening to songs and spoken word
- watching documentaries and films
- going to museums and exhibitions
- visiting memorial sites
- going through old family documents and photo albums
- an archive not mentioned here

I THINK, THESE ARCHIVES ...

- are neutral
- are personal

I THINK, THESE ARCHIVES ...

- document reality
- are biased
- are different every time
- are well organised
- are unfair
- are emotional
- are unprejudiced
- are emotional
- collect a lot
- are objective
- only show part of the picture

43

END POINT

Fig. 29



JE MPICA  
PICHA ALIKUWA  
NA DHUMUNI  
CANI WAKATI  
WA KUPICA  
PICHA HII?  
  
WAS HAT  
DER'DIE  
FOTOCRAF  
MIT DIESEM  
FOTO  
BEZWECKT?  
  
WHAT WAS  
THE PHOTO  
CRAPHER'S  
PURPOSE IN  
TAKING THIS  
PICTURE?

HUONI  
NINI?  
  
WAS  
SEHEN  
SIE  
NICHT?  
  
WHAT  
DON'T  
YOU SEE?

UNAONA  
NINI?  
  
WAS  
SEHEN  
SIE?  
  
WHAT  
DO YOU  
SEE?





KUANCALIA  
MPYA  
NEU  
BETRACHTEN  
RE-  
ASSESS

JIC NI NTI AU KUMBI?  
SI SI CHUKATI OCHA SUKATI?  
SI FI AN CHUKI OI SUKATI?

Handwritten notes on a red panel, including a table with columns for 'Lugha', 'Mwaka', and 'Mwaka'. The text is in Swahili and includes dates like '1710', '1711', '1712', '1713', '1714', '1715', '1716', '1717', '1718', '1719', '1720', '1721', '1722', '1723', '1724', '1725', '1726', '1727', '1728', '1729', '1730'.

KUTOKUWEPWA

KUKUMBUKA

Printed text on a red panel, including a table with columns for 'Mwaka', 'Mwaka', and 'Mwaka'. The text is in Swahili and includes dates like '1710', '1711', '1712', '1713', '1714', '1715', '1716', '1717', '1718', '1719', '1720', '1721', '1722', '1723', '1724', '1725', '1726', '1727', '1728', '1729', '1730'.

Red panel with a white grid pattern, possibly representing a bookshelf or a data table.







DER SUBJEK  
IT AN OBJEC  
UBJECT?

IACHA PEN  
CKE HAT  
HINTERL  
DID THE RO

KUANCALIA  
MPYA  
NEU  
BETRACHTEN  
RE-  
ASSESS



“IT IS COMPLICATED” ?

# 'OBJECTS' – REASSESSED

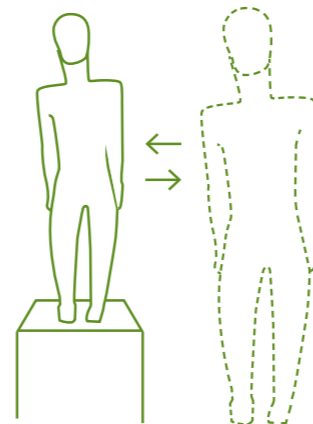
'Objects' are embedded in human relationships and interactions. In these display cases you can see substitutes for four 'objects'. We would like to tell you fragments of their stories that are known to us: about the people who used the 'objects', about the role of the 'objects' in their respective societies and about the violent events that the previous owners and their 'objects' experienced.

How do we – the white team of curators – know these fragmentary stories? We found them by searching through the colonial archive, which contains some information, but also has many omissions and reiterates prejudice and racism, and by trying to read this archive in unfamiliar ways and between the lines. This is why the pink spaces in this part of the exhibition denote blanks – and thus highlight the limitations of our archive and our perspective.

Three of the four 'objects' were appropriated by violent means. We do not know if the people from their countries and regions of origin would accept the way the 'objects' would be presented today. In the case of the fourth 'object', we do not know whether the original owner consented to its being displayed in a museum. This is why we are not exhibiting the originals, but substitutes.

## METHOD: ALLOWING SURROGATES TO SPEAK

In accordance with the principle observed for the exhibition, namely "No Consent – No Object?", the original versions of the four 'objects' at the centre of the exhibition were not displayed. However, to tell their stories, 3D prints, artistic drawings, or outlines of these 'objects' were presented. For example, a white 3D version of the *kigiilya* figure was shown with the wounds marked in pink (see fig. 36). Thus, the original was not exhibited because no consent had been given, but the copy visualizes the brutal story surrounding it. This approach offers a respectful and sensitive means of presenting cultural goods in exhibitions that can promote discussion.



## MY NOTES

A large grid of dotted lines for taking notes, spanning the width of the page and extending down to the bottom of the page.

## KIGIILYA.

### A WOODEN HUMAN FIGURE FROM BUKEREBE ISLAND IN LAKE VICTORIA



Fig. 35

Violence is inscribed into the figure, as is highlighted by the markings. *Kigiilya* was looted, exhibited and damaged in the violent context of colonialism. The figure is connected in special ways with both pre-colonial and post-colonial power relations and rule. Many actors are therefore linked to it: the *bakama* (kings) of Bukerebe and their ancestors, political elites, trade caravans of the Nyamwezi, Catholic missionaries and East African catechists,

members of the German military, explorers (as actors of colonial conquest) and employees of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Ethnological Museum Berlin) as well as the Tanzanian writer Aniceti Kitereza, grandson of *omukama* Machunda, and many more.

#### IS IT AN 'OBJECT' OR SUBJECT?

#### DOES KIGIILYA POSSESS POWER?

#### WHAT GAP DID THE ROBBERY LEAVE?

— In 1895, the German colonial army waged war against *omukama* (ruler) Rukonge, his followers and the population of the island of Bukerebe in Lake Victoria. The German soldiers looted the figure, which had great significance for Rukonge. It was put on display in the Catholic missionary station of the White Fathers on Bukerebe. A group of believers beat the figure with sticks and mutilated it. Presumably the aim was to demonstrate to the inhabitants of the island of Bukerebe that their former ruler was powerless. Lieutenant Paul Kollmann appropriated the severely damaged figure in 1897 and “gifted” the looted *kigiilya* to the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin (Royal Ethnological Museum) in the same year.

— *Kigiilya* was a symbol of the power of *Omukama* Rukonge, who ruled from c. 1870 onwards. His successor and father, Machunda, who was also a respected rainmaker, presumably received it from a Nyamwezi whose name is not known. The artist had come from Tabora with a caravan and carved the figure during his or her sojourn in Bukerebe. Machunda’s uncle Kinabo died on the day it was completed, and according to legend, Machunda transferred his spirit to the figure – thereby displaying his power. His son Rukonge too used the figure by showing it to his counsellors, highest-ranking Kerebe, and important visitors as a sign of his power. Rukonge kept *kigiilya* in his personal sleeping house (*naruzwi*), where it was guarded and cared for by the female guard Muzubwa.



Fig. 36

„How would it be, if, as a sign of reconciliation, the Germans would come to the island and help me rebuild the old palace, *Bukindo Nkokoro*, the palace of King Lukonge and his ancestors and set it up as a museum. So that *kigiilya* can come home safely. And the island and our families of former rival kings can finally find true peace.”

*Omukama* Talengwa Kaseza Lukumbuza in Berlin, June 2023

— *kigiilya* · Tanzania, Bukerebe (Ukerewe) · 19th c. · wood · 114 × 31 × 16.5 cm · creators, users, custodians, owners: unknown artist from Central Tanzania (Nyamwezi?); *omukama* Melango Buyanza Machunda until 1870; Muhase Itugara Rukonge; Muzubwa, member of the Abazubwa kinship group, until 1895; soldiers of the German colonial army until 1895/1896(?); missionaries and catechists of the White Fathers (Pères Blancs) until 1897; Paul Kollmann until 1897; held since 1897 by the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, III E 5529)

— In June 2023, *Omukama* Talengwa Kaseza Lukumbuza, a descendant of *Omukama* Rukonge, spent three days visiting the storage facilities of the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin’s Dahlem district and the workshop exhibition in the Humboldt Forum. Alongside additional cultural goods from Bukerebe taken from the storage cupboards, the exhibition’s primary focus was on the human sculptures known as *kigiilya*. We spoke with the *Omukama* about what these figures and other cultural belongings in the Ethnologisches Museum’s storage facilities signify and used to signify for the Kerebe.

#### WHY IS THE FIGURE CALLED KIGIILYA?

## BAG CONTAINING MEDICAL 'OBJECTS'



Fig. 37

This bag containing ninety-six medical 'objects' tells us many different things. First of all, it tells us what an important social status healers in East Africa had at the time. Representatives of the German colonial power regarded healers as key resistance figures during the Maji Maji War and therefore captured and executed them. Secondly, the bag symbolises the Berlin ethnologists' unscrupulous mania for collecting, which they pursued as the accomplices of the German military. Colonial warfare played a prominent role in the appropriation of 'objects'.

This bag, which lay forgotten in the museum depot for over a century and was believed lost, is full of knowledge about medical practices that are still familiar to modern-day healers. During a research trip by Tanzanian scientists and artists to Mohoro in 2017, practising healers shared their knowledge about some of the 'objects'.

The bag and all its contents are sensitive 'objects' which were originally destined for the exclusive use of healers and were not supposed to be exposed to public view. It has also been established that the bag was stolen by violent means. Therefore it is represented here by a drawing created by the Tanzanian artist Amani Abeid.

60

## WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE MEDICINE IN THE BAG?

— The history of the bag with medical 'objects' is connected with the East African population's resistance during the Maji Maji War (1905–1907). Its original owner was a healer in southern Tanzania. One of the known healers was Kinjeketile Ngwale (also known as Kinjikitile), who became a key figure in the Maji Maji War through his prophecies and through his preparing sacred water (*maji*). In 1905, he was hunted down by the German colonial army, taken prisoner and finally (probably in the same year) executed in Mohoro. At the same place this medicine bag came into the possession of the Germans. In 1907, the colonial division of the German Foreign Office had the bag sent to the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Ethnological Museum Berlin) as "spoils of war". It was entered into the main historical catalogue with the racist, derogatory description

"Sack made of animal skin with a magician's utensils." In the 1960s, politicians and scientists in independent Tanzania frequently portrayed the Maji Maji War as the source of the national independence movement, stressing the trans-regional unity of the different societies during this war. President Julius Nyerere and his TANU party fostered cohesion among the population in order to consolidate their policy of African socialism (*Ujamaa*).

As a result, issues such as collaboration with the Germans and the conflicting power interests of the various warring parties were neglected during the reappraisal of the events of the Maji Maji war. However, this war was the 'object' of study not only by historians, but also by Tanzanian theatre. Ebrahim Hussein's historical drama *Kinjeketile* (1969) is internationally known and was also published in East Germany.



Fig. 38

WHY WAS THE BAG CUT OPEN?

61

Bag containing medical objects · Tanzania, Mohoro (Muhoro) · horn, wood, raffia, glass, bamboo, animal skin, gourd shell, fat, plant fibres, bone, etc. · 40 × 20 × 26 cm (bag) · previous owner(s): healer, name unknown; loot from the Maji Maji War, imperial government of German East Africa until 1907; held since 1907 by the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, III E 14793)

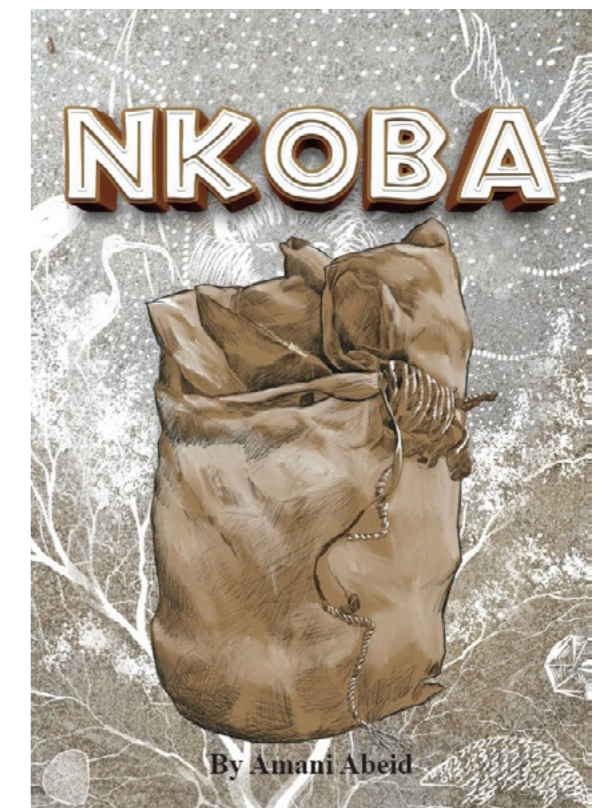


Fig. 39

## CHAIR OF A FEMALE DIGNITARY FROM URUGU



Fig. 40

Although this chair is a rather familiar ‘object’ (compared to other ‘objects’ from Tanzania), many questions remain unanswered. Almost nothing is known about the person who owned it, and we can only make vague conjectures about her identity. The colonial military member Grawert described her as the “sultana” of Urugu. The title he attributed to her illustrates how little the colonial actors knew about the organisation of East African societies, which they largely ignored. For example, they applied titles that were customary on the coast to the societies of the interior.

If East African women had a higher degree of autonomy than European women – for example, in terms of freedom of movement, control over their bodies and their political significance – this challenged the position of the colonisers. The colonial administration and its structures weakened the role of East African women politically, socially and economically. This chair – and the lack of information about the woman who owned it – is an expression of the great silence that envelops East African women in positions of power.

62

— Anyone looking at this striking chair from Urugu in the depot of the Ethnological Museum today will notice a small tag attached with string and bearing the description “Häuptlingsstuhl”. The term, which has been applied to the chair for many decades, is degrading and gives a distorted picture of political structures. Setting aside the problematic label, it also ignores the fact that the earliest documents and catalogue entries mention a female dignitary as the owner of this chair and other ‘objects’ that were appropriated.

In the 124 years that the chair has been in German possession, the ascription was changed several times. Exhibition catalogues describe the chair’s owner as the wife of the ruler. Thus the former owner’s actual position of power was continually made invisible. But what was the real status of the woman from whose house this and other ‘objects’ were looted? Can we draw conclusions from the chair about her high social status?

— Chair of a dignitary · Tanzania , Urugu (Wembere) · 19th century · wood · 107 x 43 x 44 cm · authors, users, custodians, owners: artist not known by name; dignitary from Urugu until (?); Gideon von Grawert until 1898; since 1898 Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, III E 6720)

### WHO WAS THE WOMAN?



Fig. 41

63

COULD THE ‘OBJECT’ EVEN BE A FEMALE RULER’S CHAIR?

IS THE CHAIR A THRONE? WHERE IS URUGU TODAY?

## EAR ORNAMENT OF *MANGI* MAREALLE



Fig. 42

How exactly did *mangi* Marealle's striking wooden ear ornament with its inlaid copper spirals come into the possession of the wealthy Leipzig publisher Hans Meyer? The sources examined to date provide no explanation. What significance and function did the 'object' have for *mangi* Marealle,

who ruled in Marangu from the 1880s onwards, and how was it related to his status as *mangi*?

Without knowing the answers to these questions it is impossible to say with certainty whether the 'object' was even regarded as saleable. Presumably Marealle gave the ear ornament to Meyer because he thought it was important to establish good relations with the German colonial actors. Dignitaries like Marealle sought to assert their own interests in a highly charged environment of cooperation and resistance. Thus the ear ornament was also the 'object' of colonial negotiation processes and (power) relationships.

64 — The main historical catalogue of the Berlin Ethnological Museum lists Hans Meyer as the "donor", while *mangi* Marealle appears in the 'object' description as the wearer of the ear ornament. Names are rarely mentioned in connection with the more than 8,000 'objects' from the Tanzanian mainland that were appropriated during the German and British colonial period.

Most of the creators, holders and users of the 'objects' remain anonymous. German and European "collectors" generally mentioned only dignitaries from East Africa and specified their relationships with the 'objects'. Women in positions of political power rarely feature in the colonial archives at all. Most of them either remain nameless or are ignored outright. Some of these 'objects' had the character of trophies.

— From the early 1890s, *Mangi* Marealle used his contacts with representatives of the colonial state to instrumentalise them in the service of his bid to hold political power. He discredited his rivals to the Germans and thus consolidated his position in the colonial governing hierarchy, ultimately advancing to become the most powerful *mangi* of the eastern Kilimanjaro region in the 1890s. He controlled twenty-seven of the forty-four statelets of the Chagga people living near the Kilimanjaro and acquired the sobriquet of Kilamia, "the conqueror".

But even Marealle's status was fragile, since he was dependent on the goodwill of whoever happened to be the German station chief in Moshi. Military campaigns against *mangi* who were deemed uncooperative and executions by the Germans were integral parts of colonial rule. Marealle abdicated in 1912.

WHAT WAS MAREALLE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THIS EAR ORNAMENT?



Fig. 43

— Ear ornament · Tanzania, Marangu (Kilimanjaro) · 19th c. · wood, copper · 1.2 × 8.2 × 8.4cm · creators, users, custodians, owners: unknown artist; *mangi* Marealle of Marangu until 1887 or 1889; Hans Meyer until 1897; held since 1897 by the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, III E 4815)



Fig. 44

WAS HE JUSTIFIED IN GIVING IT AWAY AND HANDING IT OVER TO A STRANGER?

WHAT WAS HIS INTENTION IN GIVING THE ITEM TO HANS MEYER?

# INTERVENTIONS

# MINGLED LIVING FORCES

A CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC INTERVENTION AS PART OF THE WORKSHOP EXHIBITION “EXHIBITING.OMISSIONS” (11 MARCH – 25 JULY 2023)

How can we artistically reflect upon the vestiges of colonial violence?  
How can one aesthetically intervene in an ethnological museum while the restitution of stolen material culture and human remains is taking place?  
How can we conceive speculative futures?

There are around 10,000 ‘objects’ in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin that can be ascribed to the territory of what is now Tanzania. The majority of these ‘objects’ were violently appropriated during the era of German and British colonial rule. The workshop exhibition “Exhibiting. Omissions – Objects from Tanzania and the Colonial Archives” provided a new approach to questioning, remembering, and contemplating the ‘objects’ held by the museum as well as their stories. As part of the exhibition, students examined colonial violence in the intervention “Mingled Living Forces”. They used performance, installations, printing, sculpture, painting, video, and virtual reality to explore the significance of collecting and exhibiting in the context of domination as well as upholding colonial relationships. Moreover, they reflected on ways in which museums might operate in the future once human remains and articles of material culture have been returned.

“Mingled Living Forces” was created as part of the tandem seminar “Colonial Presents: Artistic and Curatorial Interrogating” and “Zeichnen Farbe Fläche – Spatial Drawing” at weißensee kunsthochschule berlin during the winter semester of 2022/23. Juana Awad, from the Department of Theory and History, and Elaine Bonavia, from the Department of Textile- and Material-Design, were responsible for the curatorial development process and teaching.



Fig. 45

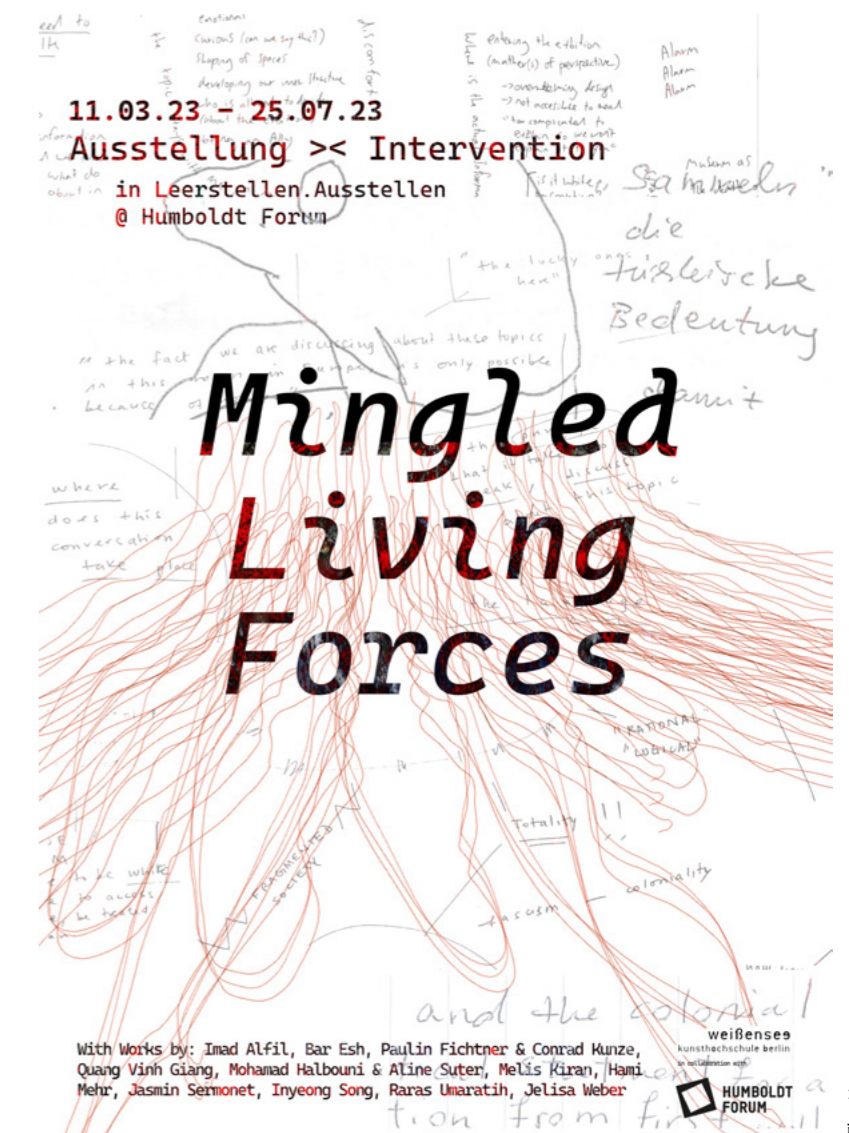


Fig. 46

# EXHIBITING.OMISSIONS. THINKING AHEAD

INTERVENTIONS BY STUDENTS OF THE HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT  
ZU BERLIN (SINCE 19 OCTOBER 2023)

How can exhibitions on colonial contexts be designed? Which objects are suitable to be exhibited at all and how can we deal with voids and colonial violence that are inherent in many objects?

Students at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin explored these questions in the seminar 'Exhibiting Colonialism' in the winter semester 2022/23. Intensive lecture discussions were followed by practical realisations and discussion formats. The students conducted interviews with selected experts, organised a public panel discussion and critically examined other exhibitional concepts of museums in Berlin, for example in the Museum Treptow or the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum.

An essential part of the seminar was also the cooperation with the curatorial team of "Exhibiting.Omissions". This was expressed from October 2022 to March 2023 through numerous on-site visits, discussions, seminar sessions and group work in the exhibition spaces. The students' contributions resulting from this work have had a permanent place in the exhibition since October 2023. These include interventions, such as displays with questions about the provenance of 'objects' (Fig.48), comments on individual stations and 'objects', such as the poster for the commode of seals (Fig.49), or additions and extensions to existing exhibition elements, such as the photo station (Fig.47). The event was organised by Janis Nalbadidacis from the Institute of History (IfG) at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

Further insights into the ideas and views of the students and the course can be found at the following link: <https://moodle.hu-berlin.de/course/view.php?id=117728>



Fig. 47



Fig. 48



Fig. 49

## CRITICAL CHECKLIST FOR TEXTS

Language plays an important role in exhibitions. We have established some guidelines to help us write the exhibition texts:

- GENDER-SENSITIVE DESIGNATIONS or “degendering”: If it is not possible to explicitly determine that the group being described comprised only male individuals, inclusive gendered language or gender-neutral formulations are used.
- RESPECTFUL DESIGNATIONS for all cultural and religious orientations and perspectives without judgemental language.
- POSITIONING: Who is speaking? Who is writing and from what perspective? Is the author avoiding the use of a supposedly neutral style of writing? Keywords: Eurocentrism, heteronormativity, and non-disability are elevated to the standard norm. Was that labelled as whiteness?
- PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS and AVOIDING the use of “one”: By using passive constructions, authors often blot out the actions of white actors (e.g. “Bolivia is being exploited.”) and reproduce Eurocentric viewpoints or disregard other perspectives (e.g., “America was discovered in 1492.”).
- RELINQUISHING INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY: Whenever possible, are people able to have their say in the form of quotes or interviews or by writing their own texts?
- AVOIDING GENERALIZATIONS: Can an exact description of the situation be provided, instead of propagating homogenizations and generalizations (e.g., “Poverty is widespread in Africa.”)
- Are the texts formulated in a COOPERATIVE rather than a paternalistic style?
- Are people PRESENTED OR DESCRIBED as actors in all of their complexity instead of being reduced to individual aspects affecting them such as poverty, “ethnic affiliation”, or a disability? Does the text avoid reproducing clichés?
- Is a CONNECTION TO THE COLONIAL PAST established if this is relevant to the current situation? Colonial structures existing outside the context of the German colonial system should also be made visible.

– Has all terminology been carefully selected? Does the text reflect the fact that LANGUAGE IS NEVER NEUTRAL?

– A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE can help in checking the choice of terminology! Would I use a particular term for my own local situation too?

– AVOID REPRODUCING THE STEREOTYPES of supposed opposites: Counter-images of Europeans, othering, the culture-nature dichotomy, etc.

– Use the same TERMS, LABELS, AND DESCRIPTIONS you would for European situations.

– RELINQUISH THE POWER OF DEFINITION: Use the terms that groups or communities use to describe themselves.

– AVOID RACIST AND ABLEIST TERMINOLOGY: When in doubt, make use of a glossary of definitions and ask experts for their opinions on the matter.

PLEASE NOTE: Racist concepts can also be conveyed when replacing certain terms (for example, “ethnicity” or “culture” instead of “race”).

"We don't need to look at looted objects and enjoy our privileged lives. We want clarification provided by people! Become a mouthpiece! Don't be part of the exploitation!" (visitor)

"I want to let you know how much I appreciated the acknowledgement & disclaimer about the colonial context under which your objects in your collection were acquired. [...] I wonder if there could be a larger section in each room dedicated to the journeys of those artefacts and their contested origins." (visitor)

"Please return the stolen art!" (visitor)

"Why is restitution so difficult?" (visitor)

"When it comes to restituting objects, why do the violently colonized countries/people have to prove the objects belong to them and not the Humboldt Forum?" (visitor)

"Why does the German government not return the objects that are stolen?" (visitor)

"Make copies of the stolen art and return the originals!" (visitor)

"There ought to be an exhibition of the returned objects in Tanzania." (visitor)

"I think it's exciting here." (visitor)

"What is being done to rectify colonial injustice?" (visitor)

# CONCLUSION

by Vicensia Shule (Critical Companion)

The process to curate “Exhibiting.Omissions” and present it to the public was a journey with many lessons and challenges. The used methodology whereby at each stage the curatorial team had an opportunity to receive feedback and update the ideas is commendable.

The process to organise this workshop exhibition is uncommon and it needs a lot of further research and engagement. The exhibition as the end product is also a new phenomenon to the museum visitors who are used to see the actual heritage properties/resources. There is a need to popularise the methodology used to create this workshop exhibition. There is a need also to research more on the impact of the “No Consent – No Object?” approach to both parties; the owners of the heritage resources in Tanganyika, present day Tanzania and in Germany.

Even the whole concept of ‘exhibiting’ peoples’ resources and properties, which were acquired mostly through violence, stealing and cheating, need further examination. Should we continue to show with pride of stolen resources where we celebrate some criminals who acquired these properties in the name of so-called collectors? Before we think of displaying these properties, we should always put ourselves in the shoes of those who lost their relatives during German violent retaliations to Tanganyika freedom fighters like what happened during the Maji Maji war against German occupation in Tanganyika from 1905–1907.

As we are trying to resort issues of painful German colonial narrations about Tanganyika, it is imperative that we revisit the common concepts which are popularly used like ‘objects’ to refer to the stolen heritage resources and properties acquired during colonialism and beyond. Many acquired properties from Tanganyika during the brutal German colonial occupation have no owners assigned to them; instead, we have the name of the person who brought the resources to Germany, the “collector”. When revising the issue of consent, whose consent are we referring to?

The issue of decolonising German colonial narrations should go beyond restitution to intensive and extensive reparations. We should always address the issue of power relations, the colonised versus the colonisers in equal weight.



Fig. 50

## PROJECT HISTORY

Collaborative research projects of the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz together with various institutions and actors in Tanzania

2016–2018: HUMBOLDT LAB TANZANIA

Cooperation partners: University of Dar es Salaam; National Museum and House of Culture, Dar es Salaam and Maji Maji Memorial Museum, Songea; Nafasi Art Space; Bookstop Sanaa Visual Art Library & Creative Learning Space, Dar es Salaam; Goethe-Institut Tanzania; descendants of the authors, users, custodians and owners of the ‘objects’

2016–2021: TANZANIA/GERMANY:

SHARED ‘OBJECT’ STORIES?

Cooperation partners: University of Dar es Salaam; National Museum of Tanzania; Nafasi Art Space, Dar es Salaam; Bookstop Sanaa Visual Art Library & Creative Learning Space, Dar es Salaam

2019–2022: COOPERATIVE PROVENANCE

RESEARCH on collections from Tanzania at the National Museum and House of Culture, Dar es Salaam and the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

Cooperation partners: University of Dar es Salaam; National Museum of Tanzania; descendants of the authors, users, custodians and owners of the ‘objects’

2019–2023: CONTESTED PROPERTY: Affect and Emotion in Transcultural Normative Conflicts about Ethnographic Collections in the Humboldt Forum (SFB 1171 Affective Societies)

Cooperation partners: Freie Universität Berlin, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin; Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg; Max-Planck-Institut für Ethnologische Forschung; Botanischer Garten & Botanisches Museum Berlin; Universität Hamburg; descendants of the authors, users, custodians and owners of the ‘objects’

FROM 2022: CONCEPTUAL WORK AND RESEARCH FOR THE COOPERATIVE EXHIBITION “HISTORY OF TANZANIA” (WORKING TITLE)

COOPERATION PARTNERS: Curators of the National Museum of Tanzania, Ethnologisches Museum – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum; experts and descendants of the authors, users, custodians and owners of the ‘objects’ in Tanzania

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Cover: Historical main index, “Liste der Objekte einer ostafrikanischen Würdenträgerin aus Urugu” (List of Objects Belonging to a Female East African Dignitary from Urugu)

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Page 2-3: South-up map of the world, 2022,

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Fig. 1: Recording of the team’s Zoom meeting, with Jocelyne Stahl, Maike Schimanowski, Kristin Weber-Sinn, Paola Ivanov, Josephine Apraku, and Vicensia Shule (from upper right to lower left) on 24 September 2021, in Berlin and Arusha.

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Fig. 7: “Indischer Händler vor seinem Geschäft” (An Indian Trader in Front of His Shop), diapositive, b/w, 60 × 90 mm, 1908, photographer: Robert Lohmeyer, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum (VIII A 1617), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Fig. 8: “Der mächtige ostafrikanische Händler Mchemba bin Mshame al Masaninga” (The Powerful East African Trader Mchemba bin Mshame al Masaninga), Dar es Salaam (?), positive print, b/w on cardboard, 1896, published by C. Vincenti, Dar es Salaam, from the estate of Ch. Porrée, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum (VIII A 21940), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

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Fig. 25: “Unter den Akazien” (Under the Acacia Trees), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, paper print, b/w, 1896, photographer: unknown, published by C. Vincenti, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum (VIII A 21929), CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Fig. 26: Exhibition of the Africa Department (Cameroon), Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin, paper print, b/w, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum

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Fig. 36: View of the surrogate *kigilya* ‘object’ in the exhibition, 3D print, polyurethane block, true to scale, 2022, © Werk 5 GmbH/Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, photo: Andreas König

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Fig. 38: View of the bag with medicinal ‘objects’ as a surrogate ‘object’ in the exhibition, designed by Amani Abeid, excerpts from the graphic novel *Nkoba*, various media, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 2022, © Amani Abeid/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum/Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, photo: Andreas König

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Fig. 42: Ear jewellery, wood, copper, undated, height x width x depth: 1,2 x 8,2 x 8,4 cm, object size: cm H: 1 cm, D: 8,2 cm, weight: 21 g, © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum/Anna-Isabel Frank, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

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Fig. 44: Portrait of *mangi* Marealle, photograph, Marangu, 1887, Fotograf: Hans Meyer, © Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Deutsche Fotothek, Hans Meyer

Fig. 45: View of the *Mingled Living Forces* intervention, photograph, 2023, © Imad Amalfi, Bar Esh, Quang Vinh Giang, Jasmin Sermonet, Inyeong Song, Jelisa Weber / Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, photo: Andreas König

Fig. 46: Poster for the intervention *Mingled Living Forces*, 2023, © weißensee kunsthochschule Berlin

Fig. 47-49: View of the exhibition showing the work of Humboldt-Universität students, photograph, 2024, © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, photo: Andreas König

Abb. 50: *Critical companion* Vicensia Shule (middle) in conversation with the curators Jocelyne Stahl (left) and Maike Schimanowski (right), photograph, 2022, © Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Maike Schimanowski

## CREDITS

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 STIFTUNG HUMBOLDT FORUM IM BERLINER SCHLOSS

 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz

Gefördert durch:

 Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien

aufgrund eines Beschlusses des Deutschen Bundestages

Most of the 'objects' from Tanzania in the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin were stolen, looted, extorted, purchased, or gifted and/or traded within the context of highly unequal power relations under German or British colonial rule. We have made the assumption that no consent has been granted for them to be shown in an exhibition.

Who can consent to their exhibition?

Where and to whom do or did the 'objects' now held in the museum depot belong?

In what manner were they acquired and appropriated?

What histories did the colonizers disregard?

Who profited from the unjust colonial system?

How do colonial structures and racist thinking continue to have an effect in the present?

Who makes the decisions today about how groups and communities are represented?

How does a lack of consent affect the way these 'objects' are displayed in museums?

How colonial is the museum archive?

Together with two *critical companions*, the curatorial team sought to analyse and discuss these and other questions as part of the workshop exhibition "Exhibiting.Omissions – Objects from Tanzania and the Colonial Archives". The exhibition was shown from September 2022 to June 2024 in Berlin's Humboldt Forum.