

International Conference

Provenance Research on Collections from Colonial Contexts. Principles, Approaches, Challenges

21 - 23 June 2021

The last decade has witnessed a growing debate about the handling and restitution of collections from colonial contexts in European museums. Numerous research projects and publications have outlined the dynamic field of postcolonial provenance research, in which the international conference held by the PAESE joint project is located.

The conference is inspired by research conducted in the PAESE sub-projects, and its focus will be on principles, challenges and approaches of provenance research on objects from colonial contexts. What is postcolonial provenance research? What moral and ethical principles (should) guide us in our work? Which methodological approaches can be profitably used for this kind of work? How can historical, ethnological and regional studies as well as legal and other approaches be reconciled? How can we take account of the polyphony of historical sources, both from the so-called societies of origin and from European perspectives? What challenges arise in a multidisciplinary approach or in a dialogue with representatives of the so-called countries of origin? How can cooperative provenance research be arranged? What norms, procedures and negotiation processes are used to assess the legal status of colonial collections? How can hard and soft law be further developed in the field of tension between law and intercultural justice? What principles do we wish to establish both for future cooperative work with the objects and for their future handling? And what challenges are involved in dealing with the collections in the future?

The PAESE project is a network of six collections and nine sub-projects that have been jointly conducting basic research on the origins and acquisition paths of ethnological collections in Lower Saxony at museums and universities since 2018. The focus is on networking and cooperation with representatives of the so-called societies of origin in Namibia, Cameroon, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea and Australia as well as on creating transparency and opening a dialogue about the objects and their future handling.

The conference will be held online. If you would like to attend, please register under info@postcolonial-provenance-research.com with your name, institution and email address to receive further information.

Monday, 21 June 2021

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (CET)	Welcome Panel
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (CET)	Keynote
12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. (CET)	<i>Lunch Break</i>
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (CET)	Dialogues between Theory and Practice. Theoretical Approaches and Case Studies of Postcolonial Provenance Research
3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. (CET)	<i>Coffee Break</i>
3:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. (CET)	Collecting Strategies and Collectors' Networks in European Colonies

Tuesday, 22 June

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (CET)	Managing, Using and Researching Objects in Collections
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (CET)	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m. (CET)	Transdisciplinary Provenance Research on Objects from Colonial Contexts
12:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. (CET)	<i>Lunch Break</i>
2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. (CET)	Cases of Restitution
3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (CET)	<i>Coffee Break</i>
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. (CET)	Cooperation Projects on Cameroonian Collections. Experiences and Perspectives

Wednesday, 23 June

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (CET)	Hidden Objects - Sensitive and Restricted Objects in Museum Collections. Issues Surrounding their Storage, Access, Consultations, and Potential Repatriation
11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (CET)	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:15 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. (CET)	Law versus Justice? An Intercultural Approach to the Problem of European Collections of Colonial Provenance
12:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. (CET)	<i>Lunch Break</i>
2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. (CET)	Closing Session