

History of the Collections of the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum. Context, Methodology and Current Research

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Abstract: How does the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum approach the issue of the restitution of cultural property? What research policy does it implement regarding the history and constitution of the collections it preserves? What projects have been initiated that contribute to documenting the provenance of cultural goods? This article summarizes the methodological approach of the institution, which has started to prioritize, in its scientific and cultural policy, the research into the history of its collections and their provenance. Multidisciplinary research projects and multi-institutional partnerships are carried out with scientific teams in the countries of origin and together with indigenous communities to shed light on the shared history of the collections. These joint research projects bear witness to the evolution of professional practices and a change of paradigm: the history of and discourse on the collections kept in the museum are not the monopoly of the institution but are constructed with professionals from the countries of origin in a more open and collaborative conception of heritage policies. This article presents: 1) an overview of the political and legal contexts in France in which requests for the restitution of cultural property are made, 2) the museum's research policy on the history of collections, and 3) some results of provenance research through two case-studies of objects from colonial contexts in Africa.

Keywords: Provenance research; colonial contexts; Africa; returns; museal policy

How does the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum approach the issue of the restitution of cultural property? What research policy does it implement concerning the history and development of the collections it preserves? What projects have been initiated to help document the provenance of the works? This article summarizes the methodological approach of the institution, which has started to prioritize, in its scientific and cultural policy, the research into the history of its collections and their provenance. This policy flourished since the appointment of its president, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, in May 2020 and the creation of the position of an advisor on the history of the collections in December 2020. Multidisciplinary projects and multi-institutional partnerships are carried out with scientific teams in the countries of origin and together with indigenous communities to shed light on the

shared history of the collections.¹ These joint research projects bear witness to changes in professional practices and a paradigm shift: the history of and discourse on the collections held by museums cannot be developed unilaterally, but must be built in conjunction with professionals in the countries of origin, as part of a more open and collaborative approach to heritage policies.² This article provides an overview of the political and legal contexts in France in which requests for the restitution of cultural property are made, and of the museum's research policy on the history of its

- 1 https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/1-Edito/2-Collections/1-Histoire-des-collections/histoire_des_collections/2022-HISTOIRE-COLLECTION_.pdf, <01.06.2023>.
- 2 Emmanuel Kasarhérou: Decentering the Gaze on Quai Branly's Collections (Le musée du quai Branly à l'heure du décentrement du regard), ICOFOM, 44^e symposium, The Decolonization of Museology: Museums, Diversity and Myths of Origin (La décolonisation de la muséologie: musées, métissages et mythes d'origine), lecture given on 16th March 2021.

collections. Finally, it reports on some of the results of provenance research through two case-studies of objects from colonial contexts in Africa.

Restitutions: Legal and Political Contexts in France

The issue of the restitution of cultural property to countries formerly colonized by France constitutes an old debate that began already before the independence of those countries and was developed considerably in the 1960ies and late 1970ies, notably with the call by Amadou Mahtar Mbow, General Director of UNESCO, on 7th June 1978 for the “return of irreplaceable cultural heritage to those who created it”.³ This question was revived in France and Europe by the speech of the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, in Ouagadougou in 2017,⁴ and the publication of the relevant report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy entitled “Restoring African Heritage – Towards a New Relational Ethics” (“Restituer le patrimoine africain – Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle”).⁵

The purpose of the first part of this article is not to retrace the history of restitutions and claims for cultural property, which have already been studied exhaustively by various researchers and presented in recent publications,⁶ but to provide some political and legal context for understanding the current legislative system for responding to requests for restitution in France.

National and International Legal Framework

The examination of official requests considers the national legal framework of public accessibility. National public collections in France are protected by three main principles: inalienability, imprescriptibility and unseizability. The principle of inalienability of the public domain has existed since the Ancien Régime and applies in particular to public museum collections. In 1566, the Edict of Moulins made a distinction between property belonging to the King of France and property belonging to the French Crown, which the king could dispose of but not sell.⁷ The foundation of the legal system for cultural property, particularly museums, was laid in the revolutionary context at the end of the eighteenth century and is based on public ownership and increased protection against any attempt of appropriation by a private individual. Since then, this legal system has continued to be strengthened: the principle of inalienability is enshrined in Act

3 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000046054_fre, <01.06.2023>.

4 “I want the conditions to be in place within five years for temporary or permanent restitutions of African heritage in Africa”, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/11/28/discours-demmanuel-macron-a-luniversite-de-ouagadougou>, <01.06.2023>.

5 Felwine Sarr / Bénédicte Savoy: Restoring African Heritage – Towards a New Relational Ethics (Restituer le patrimoine africain – Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle), submitted to the President of the Republic on 29th November 2018; Souleymane Bachir Diagne: The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics. The Report and Its Impact, keynote at the Sharing museums symposium, 20th to 22nd October 2022, Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris, France.

6 See Pierre Noual: Restitutions. Une histoire culturelle et politique, Paris 2021, 431; Lars Müller: Returns of Cultural Artefacts and Human Remains, (Post)colonial Context: Mapping Claims between the mid-19th Century and the 1970s, Magdeburg 2021, <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2021-00017>; Conference *The Long History of Claims for the Return of Cultural Heritage from Colonial Contexts*, 2021, online conference of the German Lost Art Foundation in cooperation with the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the Research Center for Material Culture of the National Museum of World Cultures, the Netherlands, https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Content/01_Stiftung/EN/Event-review/2021/2021-12-20_conference.html, <11.09.2023>; Felicity Bodenstern / Damiana Otoi / Eva-Maria Troelenberg: Contested Holdings: Museum Collections in Political, Epistemic and Artistic Processes of Return, Oxford / New York 2022; and Bénédicte Savoy: Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat (Le long combat de l'Afrique pour son art, Histoire d'une défaite post-coloniale), Paris 2023.

7 Claire Chastanier: Contribution au débat, in: ICOM France (ed.): Restituer? Les musées parlent aux musées, 16, <https://www.icom-musees.fr/sites/default/files/2019-04/Restituer%20%3F%20Les%20muse%CC%81es%20parlent%20aux%20muse%CC%81es%20-%20brochure%20nume%CC%81rique.pdf>, <01.06.2023>.

no. 2002-5 of 4th January 2002 on the Museums of France, codified in article L. 451-5 of the French Heritage Code.⁸

Property belonging to the public domain cannot change ownership, regardless of the historical circumstances of its acquisition. Only a law derogating from the principle of the inalienability of collections can allow property to be downgraded and ownership to be transferred. Each restitution, each transfer of ownership of a work of art, mobilizes the entire French governmental and parliamentary apparatus, and therefore requires a strong political will.

This national law is superimposed on the international legal framework resulting from conventions and treaties signed and ratified by France. The most important of these is the 1970 *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, which was ratified by France on 7th January 1997 and came into force on 7th April 1997. Lastly, the framework is based on the recommendations of professional networks and ethical charters, such as the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*,⁹ and guides drawn up in several European countries, such as the *Leitfaden zum Umgang mit Sammlungsgut aus kolonialen*

Kontexten (Guide to the Treatment of Collections from Colonial Contexts) published by the Association of German Museums.¹⁰

First Laws on the Restitution of Cultural Property in France

Since the independence of the former French colonies, demands for the return of cultural property, held in French heritage institutions, have led to refusals, bilateral cultural cooperation agreements or long-term loan and deposit agreements for works of art without any established procedure.¹¹ The first two specific laws derogating from the principle of the inalienability of national collections concerned the return of human remains: the first one in 2002, for the return to South Africa of the body of Sarah (“Saartjie”) Baartman (1789-1815), known as the “Hottentot Venus”,¹² and the second one in 2010, for the return of a set of ten Māori heads to New Zealand.¹³

In 2017, the speech given at the University of Ouagadougou by the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, opened up new prospects for heritage collaboration with African countries. In 2018, the publication of the report entitled

8 “The assets making up the collections of the Museums of France belonging to a public entity form part of their public domain and are therefore inalienable”. The 2002 law on museums also introduced the possibility of downgrading an asset that forms part of the collections of museums in France. Such declassification is subject to the opinion of a National Scientific Commission of the Museums of France, but cannot be applied to objects donated, bequeathed or acquired with the financial assistance of the state. See https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000042654163, <01.11.2021>.

9 The *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* is a reference document that defines standards of practice for museum professionals. It was adopted in 1986 and revised in 2004 and again in 2021. See <https://icom.museum/fr/ressources/normes-et-lignes-directrices/code-de-deontologie/>, <11.09.2023>; Guidance for Restitution and Return of Items from University Museums and Collections, ICOM international committee for university museums and collections, 2021: principles expressed in the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums concerning the return and restitution of items from museum collections and in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. See <http://umac.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UMAC-Guidance-Restitution-2022.pdf>, <01.11.2021>.

10 <https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen/guide-consacr-aux-collections-musales-issues-de-contextes-coloniaux/>, <01.11.2021>. Other examples include: Ethical principles for the management and restitution of colonial collections in Belgium (Principes éthiques pour la gestion et la restitution des collections coloniales en Belgique), June 2021, <https://restitutionbelgium.be/fr/rapport>, <11.09.2023>; Association of Swiss Museums: Booklet on Provenance Research in Museums, vol. II: Collections Linked to Colonial Contexts (Association des musées suisses: Livret sur les Recherches de provenance dans les musées). Basic concepts and introduction to practice, <https://www.museums.ch/fr/publications/standards/recherche-de-provenance-collection-coloniale.html>, <01.11.2021>.

11 Examples include the long-term loan of the manuscripts to Korea in 1993, and more recently the loan of the skulls to Algeria and the decorative element of Queen Ranavalona III's canopy to Madagascar in 2020.

12 Law no. 2002-323 of 6th March 2002 on the return by France of the remains of Saartjie Baartman to South Africa, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000000776900#:~:text=ChronoL%C3%A9gi&text=A%20compteur%20from%20the%20date,Mus%C3%A9um%20national%20history%20naturelle>, <01.06.2023>.

13 Law no. 2010-501 of 18th May 2010 to authorize the return by France of the Maori heads to New Zealand and on the management of collections, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT00002227321#:~:text=A%20compteur%20de%20la%20date,remises%20%C3%A0%20la%20Nouvelle%2DZ%C3%A9lande.&text=La%20commission%20scientifique%20nationale%20des%20collections%20mention-n%C3%A9e%20%C3%A0%20l'article%20L>, <01.06.2023>.

“Restituer le patrimoine africain: vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle”, entrusted to Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, and the announcement of the restitution of 26 works to the Republic of Benin raised the question of the circulation and return of African cultural property acquired during the colonial period. A number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa then made official requests to France for the return of cultural property, much of which is held by the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum: Benin, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali and Senegal.

The law of 24th December 2020 on the restitution of cultural property to the Republic of Benin and the Republic of Senegal was a new,¹⁴ third law of its kind, derogating from the principle of inalienability of national collections, voted by Parliament and promulgated by the President of the Republic.¹⁵ While the first two laws concerned human remains, this third law, for the first time, aimed to ‘downgrade’ works from national collections. The 26 works from Benin, taken from the royal palaces of Abomey by Général Dodds (1842-1922) after the fighting in the Dahomey campaign in 1892, were returned to their country of origin in 2021 (Figure 1). There was no legal obligation to make this historic and unprecedented restitution, since these works were spoils of war linked to the colonial conquests and not covered by the international conventions then in force.¹⁶ It can therefore be interpreted as

a moral obligation and an ethical approach,¹⁷ “the starting point for a renewed policy of cooperation with African partners”.¹⁸



Figure 1: The exhibition *Bénin, la restitution de 26 œuvres des trésors royaux d'Abomey* on 30th October 2021, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

A Legislative Perspective?

To date, the restitution of public collections belonging to the French state or to local authorities is dealt with on a case-by-case basis and decided solely by Parliament. As this extremely protective national legal framework for cultural property only very occasionally allows for requests to be met, the French government has undertaken to create new legislative frameworks that will permit restitutions. This major change to the French legal framework will result in the study of three

14 Law no. 2020-1673 of 24th December 2020 on the restitution of cultural property to the Republic of Benin and the Republic of Senegal, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORF-DOLE000042118115/>, <01.06.2023>.

15 The bill was presented to the Council of Ministers on 15th July 2020 and the law was promulgated on 24th December 2020. Report made on behalf of the Committee on Cultural Affairs and Education on the bill, after engagement of the accelerated procedure, relating to the restitution of cultural property to the Republic of Benin and the Republic of Senegal (no. 3221), Yannick Kerlogot, Member of the National Assembly, 28, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion-cedu/l15b3387_rapport-fond, <01.11.2021>.

16 These spoils of war predate the adoption of the Hague International Convention of 1899, which prohibits the looting and seizure of property in the event of conflict (principle of non-retroactivity of laws). According to the Army Museum's (Musée de l'Armée) legal analysis of the concept of the “seizure of war” and its development, the law of 2nd March 1832 attests to the fact that property resulting from the “seizure of war” belongs to the state. See W. Lottin / L. Paraponaris: Note on the legal and historical development of the right to take, Paris 2021, https://www.musee-armee.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/Historique_du_droit_de_prise_version_courte_17_05.pdf, <11.10.2023>.

17 See Jean-Christophe Barbato: Des différentes manières de restituer le patrimoine africain. Analyse comparative du discours d'Emmanuel Macron, de la loi du 24 décembre 2020 et du rapport Sarr-Savoy, in: Clémentine Bories et al. (eds.): Les restitutions des collections muséales, aspects politiques et juridiques, Paris 2021, 107-133.

18 <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/12/18/restitution-des-biens-culturels-une-promesse-tenue-pour-une-nouvelle-page-des-relations-entre-lafric-que-et-la-france>, <01.06.2023>.

framework laws.¹⁹ These will define the framework for the consideration of restitution claims of three categories of property: cultural property, human remains held in public collections,²⁰ and Nazi-looted art as a result of anti-Semitic persecution between 1933 and 1945.²¹

The forthcoming framework law on cultural goods, the chronological and geographical scope of which has yet to be determined, will define criteria for the admissibility of requests, the restitution of goods and contextual criteria, as well as a common, transparent and collaborative administrative procedures with the countries of origin, for all requests.

The main recommendations of the report submitted to the President of the Republic in April 2023 are:

“[...] the inclusion in a law of nine restituability criteria; the setting up of ad hoc bilateral commissions made up of experts and researchers from France and the countries of origin, responsible for issuing an opinion on the appropriateness of restitution; an original mechanism entitled ‘shared heritage’ for certain symbolic works that do not meet all the restituability criteria; a Europeanisation of the restitution policy, working in particular with Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands on provenance research and the hosting of researchers from African countries.”²²

Although the framework for the restitution of cultural property is limited, an important step forward would be the systematic creation of bilateral commissions in both countries (France and the requesting state) to examine the historical and scientific case, which would provide a context for the acquisition of the work and thus form the basis for the political decision.²³

Research into the Provenance of the Collections at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum

Methodology: Internal Museum Tools and Resources

Researching the provenance of works of art has always been an intrinsic part of the work of museum collection managers, long before the debate on heritage restitution was revived. Today,

19 See the Report to the President of the Republic by Jean-Luc Martinez: Patrimoine partagé. Universalité, restitutions et circulation des œuvres d'art – Vers une législation et une doctrine françaises sur les critères de restituabilité pour les biens culturels, submitted in April 2023, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/fr/Espace-documentation/Rapports/Remise-du-rapport-Patrimoine-partage-universalite-restitutions-et-circulation-des-oeuvres-d-art-de-Jean-Luc-Martinez>, <01.06.2023>. The government has announced that all three framework laws will be presented to Parliament in 2023. Speech by the Minister of Culture, Rima Abdul Malak, 16th January 2023, <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Presse/Discours/Transcription-du-discours-de-la-ministre-de-la-Culture-Rima-Abdul-Malak-de-presentation-des-vaeux-aux-acteurs-culturels-le-16-janvier-2023-a-la>, <28.03.2023>.

20 A bill concerning requests for the restitution of human remains held in public collections was submitted to the Senate on 26th April 2023 and unanimously adopted at first reading on 13th June 2023. See <https://www.senat.fr/leg/exposes-des-motifs/ppl22-551-expose.html>, <01.06.2023>; and <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000047687993/>, <01.10.2023>.

21 LAW no. 2023-650 of 22nd July 2023 on the restitution of cultural property spoliated as a result of anti-Semitic persecution between 1933 and 1945, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORF-TEXT000047874541>, <01.10.2023>; Draft law on the restitution of cultural property spoliated as a result of anti-Semitic persecution between 1933 and 1945, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/dossierlegislatif/JORFDOLE000047464528/>, <11.09.2023>; and <https://www.senat.fr/dossier-legislatif/pjl22-539.html>, <01.06.2023>.

22 Ministry of Culture press release, April 2023. See <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Presse/Communiqués-de-presse/Remise-du-rapport-Patrimoine-partage-universalite-restitutions-et-circulation-des-oeuvres-d-art-de-Jean-Luc-Martinez>, <01.06.2023>.

23 France, differentiating between the transfer of ownership of the object and its physical transfer, even going so far as to recognize the alienable nature of property acquired in a colonial context. Belgian law of 3rd July 2022: Law recognizing the alienable nature of goods linked to the Belgian state's colonial past and determining a legal framework for their restitution and return. See https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/loi-du-03-juillet-2022_n2022042012, <01.06.2023>. In 2021, the restitution (transfer of ownership) of 440 bronzes from the former kingdom of Benin held in Berlin was recorded, and some of them are on display at the Humboldt Forum with the annotation “loan from the State of Nigeria”. See <https://www.humboldtforum.org/en/temporaere-neukonzep-tion-der-benin-sammlung/>, <01.10.2023>.

however, these tasks are of greater importance in the preparation of acquisition files, particularly as part of the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.²⁴

It has also become a priority to conduct a form of introspection on the formation and origin of the collections today held by the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum, yet inherited from previous museums and collecting institutions. These collections bring together several sets of objects from two main institutional trajectories: the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (1878-1937), then Musée de l'Homme (from 1937), the Musée des Colonies (1931-1935), then Musée de la France d'Outre-Mer (1935-1960), the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens (1960-1990), and the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (1990-2004).

This retrospective research on the collections consists of a close examination of the conditions of acquisition, with particular attention paid to: booty and spoils of war, scientific missions conducted during the colonial period, and archaeological objects that could be the result of illicit trafficking in cultural property protected by the 1970 UNESCO Convention. A specific project on provenance is being conducted since 2019. It aims to retrace the itinerary of works, from their former context of use and their acquisition to their entry into the national collections. This proactive research covers the entire collection, i.e. 380.000 items recorded in the museum's inventory register between the sixteenth and the twenty-first century, from four different continents.

Research priorities have been set around a corpus of works whose acquisition is suspected to be illicit. Several evaluation criteria have been established:

- 1) illegality, if there is any doubt about the legality of the acquisition under the laws in force at the time;
- 2) illegitimacy, if the acquisition was legal, but there is a doubt, backed up by documentation, as to its legitimacy, as is the case for property taken without the owner's consent or in his/her absence (stolen objects, looted objects, particularly in funerary contexts), by violence (seizure during conflicts) or under duress (forced purchase);
- 3) the pre-existence of a request for return or restitution.

In order to carry out this work, and in addition to strengthening institutional links and academic partnerships, the museum has, first of all, reorganized its internal resources. Firstly, by dedicating the position of curator, which I occupy since 2021, to coordinating provenance research in a transdisciplinary way and to conduct research into the history of the museum's collections. Secondly, by granting additional resources that will be redirected towards the following objectives: hosting post-doctoral scholars whose research projects are linked to the history of the collections, creating and maintaining two joint grants with the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Fondation pour la mémoire de l'esclavage (Foundation for the Memory of Slavery),²⁵ and creating fixed-term contracts to enable provenance research on objects acquired in colonial contexts in Africa.

Origin search tools are in place since 2021: an archival and methodological guide, to lead the reader through the classification of the museum's digitized archives and to explain the methodology for starting provenance research (markings, labels, inventory registers, work files, etc.), archiving of reference files and summary notes on the acquisition contexts of the collections studied (which can be consulted by researchers at the museum), documentary files on conservation-restoration analyses, annual roadmaps for each geographical

24 As part of its acquisition policy, the museum secures its acquisitions by exercising greater vigilance when compiling the files submitted and by carrying out the required due diligence in accordance to the recommendations of the *Vademecum* of the Service des Musées de France (2020) and the ministerial report on securing national museums (2022). See <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Thematic/Museums/Pour-les-professionnels/Pre-serve-and-manage-collections/Manage-collections/Vademecum-des-acquisitions-a-l-usage-des-musees-de-France>, <11.09.2023>; and <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Espace-documentation/Rapports/Rapport-de-mission-Ameliorer-la-securite-des-acquisitions-des-musees-nationaux>, <01.06.2023>.

25 <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/bourses-de-recherche-sur-lhistoire-et-le-parcours-des-collections-extra-europeennes>, <11.09.2023>; and <https://www.quaibrany.fr/fr/recherche-scientifique/activites/bourses-et-prix-de-these/bourse-detudes-doctorales-pour-la-naissance-de-lesclavage-colonial>, <10.04.2023>.



Figure 2: Daouda Keïta, Director of the National Museum of Mali and Mamadou Cisse, archaeologist, studying the Malian collections at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum, 14th June 2022, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

area (setting out priorities for provenance research), “provenance workshops” bringing together researchers and conservation teams to discuss research findings and validate the “historical provenance” fields in the collections database. These in-house resources are accessible to all researchers who come to study the collections. In this way, the museum makes its collections, archives and inventories, as well as the associated documentation and databases accessible. The collections can be consulted in a specific consultation area, located in the reserves: the museum welcomes several hundred researchers every year and provides access to more than 3.500 works (Figure 2).²⁶

²⁶ In 2022, 3.639 works were made available to 610 consultant researchers. Activity report 2022, Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum, 31.

Pooling Expertise and Academic Partnerships

The museum also relies on the expertise of numerous institutional and academic partners to conduct joint research into the history of the collections and the provenance of the objects. This research requires the sharing of tools and skills on a national and international scale, both with teams in the countries of origin,²⁷ and with European institutions facing the same issues. These partnerships are conducted with foreign museums, universities and research laboratories, and with French heritage institutions holding collections of common provenance. Their aim is to cross-reference archival, published and oral sources, and to establish common research guides and databases. By way of example, academic partnership agreements should be signed with the

²⁷ Two collaborative projects have been carried out with communities of origin in North and South America: the *CRoyAN project* and the *SAWA project*. See *Revue des musées de France* 1 (2021), 60-113, <https://croyan.quaibrantly.fr/fr/halito-bonjour?context=4a0e003>, <11.09.2023>; and <https://watau.fr/s/watau-fra/page/accueil>, <10.04.2023>.

Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer and the Service Historique de la Défense, key actors in the conservation of French colonial archives.

At a European level, the museum is involved in the *Actor-Based Provenance Research Project*, coordinated by the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, which brings together a number of researchers from European ethnographic museums. The Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum is also the scientific coordinator of the French-German museum dialogue, launched in 2022.²⁸ The museum also took part in the *Digital Benin* project run by MAARK (Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt) in Hamburg: this is a digital platform bringing together data (objects, photographs, documentation and archives) from the collections of the former kingdom of Benin in Nigeria, which were looted at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹ As part of studying the provenance of the aforementioned corpus of objects, the museum welcomed Felicity Bodenstern, a teacher-researcher and art historian specialized in the history of museums and collections, for a one-year delegation.

There are two ways of pooling expertise and welcoming professionals to work at the museum: delegations of teacher-researchers and the funding of researchers by the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which allows for an outside scientific perspective on the collections and the museum’s activities. Furthermore, there is the *Résidence culture* and *Parcours de collections* schemes, funded by the Ministry of Culture. These enable professionals from museums abroad to spend between one and three months studying the collections. This is an opportunity of working together to document the collections and enrich the database by refining the information on the identification, vernacular names, use, manufacture, dating and historical origin of the objects. Around twenty scholars and professionals, museum directors or curators have worked at the museum within this framework since 2013.³⁰

28 <https://www.museumbund.de/dialogue-museal-franco-allemand/>, <01.10.2023>.

29 <https://digitalbenin.org/>, <10.04.2023>.

30 <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/Europe-et-international/L-action-europeenne-et-internationale-du-ministere-de-la-Culture/Programmes-d-accueil-de-formation-et-d-echange-pour-les-professionnels-etrangers-de-la-culture>, <11.09.2023>; <https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/missions-et-fonctionnement/cooperation-internationale>, <10.04.2023>.

Reinforced and Renewed Heritage Cooperation with African Countries

In 2021, priority was given to research into works acquired in a colonial context in African countries. In-depth provenance research will be carried out as part of the official restitution requests submitted in 2019 by Benin, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali, and Senegal. Each restitution project requires lengthy preparatory work by the museum’s research teams, undertaken as far as possible together with African partners. Multidisciplinary research projects and multi-institutional partnerships are pursued in cooperation with the research teams of the countries of origin and the indigenous communities in order to shed light on the collections’ common history. Among other examples, these are for Africa the *Dakar-Djibouti: counter-inquiries* project as well as the different projects on the history and conservation-restoration of the “talking drum” of the Atchan people in Ivory Coast and the “Treasure of Segou”. These two projects will be explained in greater detail below.

The *Dakar-Djibouti: counter-inquiries* research project, launched in 2021, is coordinated by Gaëlle Beaujean, head of collections in the Africa Heritage Unit.³¹ This mission, led by ethnologist Marcel Griaule (1898-1956), the founder of French ethnology, lasted for 21 months, from 1931 to 1933, and travelled through 17 African countries. More than 3.000 objects, thousands of field sheets, photographs, sound recordings and naturalist specimens were collected during the mission, which up until today remains one of the most emblematic acts of collecting in a colonial context. The account by writer and ethnologist Michel Leiris (1901-1990), the mission’s secretary, in “Phantom Africa” (“L’Afrique fantôme”), published in 1934, condemns certain methods of acquiring objects through coercion (forced purchase) or theft.

To date, the project has brought together collaborators from 9 of the 17 African countries visited, as well as numerous heritage institutions (museums, research laboratories, universities, organizations, holders of French and African

31 <https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/collections/provenances/mission-dakar-djibouti-1931-1933>, <10.04.2023>.



Figure 3: Conference *Mali in the museum's collections* in the museum's reading room with Daouda Keïta, Director of the National Museum of Mali, and Gaëlle Beaujean, in charge of the African collections, 3rd July 2022, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

knowledge etc.).³² The aim is to consolidate the information collected, which is often dispersed and difficult to access. “On-site research is carried out to gather what remains in the oral memory in order to study together how this common heritage can be enhanced and shared”.³³ The project will be presented at an exhibition to be held at the museum in 2025.

As part of the *Résidence Culture* and *Parcours des collections* programs described above, the directors of the national museums of Chad and Mali were hosted in 2021 and 2022, with those of Cameroon and Ivory Coast in 2023. These joint studies be-

tween the museum (Gaëlle Beaujean) and our African counterparts (Philippe Adoum Gariam, Daouda Keïta and Hugues Heumen, directors of the national museums of Chad, Mali and Cameroon, respectively) made it possible, among other things, to document a large part of the collections brought back by the Dakar-Djibouti mission (Figure 3).

Philippe Adoum Gariam, director of the Musée National du Tchad, also took part in the *Résidence Culture* program, funded by the French Ministry of Culture. He spent three months in 2021 studying the Sao archaeological collections from Chad and Cameroon. His research focused in particular on the provenance of material from excavations carried out in Chad and Cameroon from 1938 onwards by Jean-Paul (1907-1994) and Annie Lebeuf (1921-1995), whose archives are kept at the Eric de Dampierre Library in Nanterre. The 48 objects from Chad associated with the Dakar-Djibouti mission were also documented during this collaboration.

³² These include: the Institut des Mondes Africains, bringing together researchers from the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, the universities of Lyon 2 and Paris Nanterre (Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative), the universities of Abomey-Calavi in Benin and Gondar in Ethiopia, the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar, the National Museum of Mali in Bamako, the national museums of Chad in N'Djamena, Cameroon in Yaoundé and Djibouti, the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle and the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris.

³³ Kasarhérou 2021 (see FN 2).

Mediating and Promoting Research Work

In addition to the crucial task of researching the history of the collections, the museum faces the challenge of communicating the results to the public and emanating them into the museum environment. The presentation and the diffusion of the results of provenance research will take several forms. A specific tour about the “history of the collections” was created during 2023, to illustrate the diversity of acquisition methods and how the collections were built up over four centuries. Around 50 labels were developed for this trail, covering the historical provenance of the objects, how they were acquired and how they entered the national collections, the societies that produced them and their relationship with Western societies, the notions of cultural appropriation and permanence in contemporary art forms, and joint work with indigenous communities. The aim of this tour is to explain to the general public where the collections come from, and to talk about colonial histories, so as to offer an enlightening counterpoint to institutional history and the history of collecting.

Updated content is available on the museum’s website, keeping the public informed about the progress of research and providing answers to their main questions. Specific pages dedicated to “Provenances of collections” and “International cooperation” have been created to present the various research projects initiated by the institution.³⁴

The co-construction of museographical and mediation devices together with the communities of origin of the objects, as part of temporary exhibitions or the design of new showcases within the permanent collections, is another major focus of our interpretive work. By way of illustration, some temporary exhibition projects have been designed on the basis of *carte blanche* offered to representatives of the societies from which the collections originate: *On the road to chiefdoms of Cameroon*,

*From the visible to the invisible*³⁵ was thus entirely imagined by the Cameroonian association *Route des chefferies* in 2022. Another example, *Gularri, Water Landscapes in Northern Australia*, which has been shown at the museum in 2021, was designed in cooperation with the Yolngu people of Milingimbi Island in Arnhem Land.³⁶ New display cases and a redesigned museography for the collections from the Americas will showcase the advances made by the *Croyan* project in collaboration with Amerindian specialists (notably from the Choctaw, Haudenosaunee and Huron-Wendat Nations).³⁷

Other ideas to support this policy towards the public are: a reflection on the language and terminologies used in the museographical texts, the highlighting of the plurality of views and voices about the objects and a better promotion of the intangible heritage.

Initial Results of Provenance Research: Case Studies

The projects around the “Treasure de Ségo” and the “Talking drum of the Atchan people of Ivory Coast” are part of the museum’s research policy on the provenance and history of its collections. The summary of the main results of the research carried out by the museum’s research teams in collaboration with other partners is given below.

The “Treasure of Ségo”

The “Treasure of Ségo” (Trésor de Ségo) was a war booty taken in the town of Ségo (now Mali) on 6th April 1890 by Général Louis Archinard (1850-1932) during the colonial conquest of West Africa, a war waged against the Toucouleur Empire founded by El Hadj Umar Tall (1796-1864) and led by his son, Ahmadou Tall (1836-1897).³⁸ A research group has been set up in 2021 together with various institutional partners to map the collections linked

34 <https://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/collections/provenances>, <11.09.2023>; https://www.quaibranly.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/1-Edito/2-Collections/1-Histoire-des-collections/histoire_des_collections/2022_HISTOIRE-COLLECTION_.pdf, <11.09.2023>; <https://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/missions-et-fonctionnement/cooperation-internationale>, <01.06.2023>.

35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUoNZk-KrMc>, <11.10.2023>; <https://routedeschefferies.com/>, <01.10.2023>.

36 <https://m.quaibranly.fr/fr/expositions-evenements/au-musee/expositions/details-de-levenement/e/gularri-38925>, <01.06.2023>.

37 See <https://croyan.quaibranly.fr/fr/>, <01.06.2023>.

38 Daniel Foliard: Les vies du ‘trésor de Ségo’, in: *Revue historique* 688 (2018), No. 4, 869-898; Taina Ternoven: *Les Otages. Contre-histoire d’un butin colonial*, Paris 2022.

to the “Treasure de Ségou” and Louis Archinard. It brings together the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum, the Army Museum (Musée de l’Armée) in Paris, the Natural History Museum in Le Havre (Muséum d’Histoire naturelle du Havre) and the National French Library (Bibliothèque nationale de France). The group is supported by the National Overseas Archives (Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer) in Aix-en-Provence, the Centre of History and Studies of the Overseas Troops (Centre d’Histoire et d’Etudes des Troupes d’Outre-Mer) in Fréjus, the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris and, in Africa, the Museum of Black Civilizations (Musée des civilisations noires) in Dakar and the National Museum of Mali (Musée national du Mali) in Bamako. The aim is to set up a network to identify collections scattered across several institutions and to share the results of research into their provenances.

The Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum holds several collections linked to Général Archinard: 134 objects brought back by the general during his various expeditions to Senegal and Mali between 1883 and 1902; 20 jewels from the capture of Ségou (present-day Mali); 242 objects and 184 manuscripts from Bandiagara, donated by Général Edouard Réquin (1879-1953), Archinard’s nephew.³⁹ The Muséum d’Histoire naturelle du Havre and the Musée de l’Armée also hold collections recorded as “donations” by Général Archinard, which are currently being studied. Among the collections of the Musée de l’Armée was the sabre attributed to El Hadj Umar Tall, which was returned to the Republic of Senegal in 2020.⁴⁰ Finally, since 1892, the Bibliothèque nationale de France has held the Umar library of Ségou, comprising 492 manuscripts, listed

as “Arabic 5259” to “Arabic 5749” in the Arabic manuscripts collection of the Department of Manuscripts.⁴¹

In 2021, the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum commissioned a historical and provenance study from a specialist independent researcher, Justine Soistier.⁴² In particular, the research has made it possible to document the history and provenance of parts of the “Treasure of Ségou” held by the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum: reconstruction of the colonial context of this spoils of war and its journey from the capture of Ségou to its entry into the national collections through a study based on the records held in part by the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence. The jewels were sent to the *Exposition Permanente des Colonies* in 1892, deposited with the Musée de l’Armée in 1910, and then to the *Exposition Coloniale* of 1931. They returned to the collections of the Musée des Colonies in 1932, which became the Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer in 1935, the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens in 1960, the Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie in 1990, before being transferred to the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum in 2004. Of the 96 gold and silver jewels crated at Kayes on 31st May 1890 and sent to France,⁴³ only 20 have survived and are now held at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum.

A material and technical study of the jewelry forming part of this treasure trove has also been carried out. It was coordinated by the museum’s

41 They “formed the library of Ahmadu Sheku, whose full name is Ahmad al-Kabir al-Madani. Kabir al-Madani, son of al-Hadj Umar, head of the Muslim state based in Segou in the second half of the 19th century. This unique library of manuscripts had been created by his father al-Hadj Umar, head of the Tijjaniya brotherhood and leader of the holy war against the Banama of the Masina state, between 1852 and 1864. It was taken by Colonel Louis Archinard when he captured the town of Ségou in April 1890. Transported in four crates to Paris, the manuscripts were stored in the colonial supplies shop before being entrusted to the Bibliothèque nationale in 1892”. See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/html/und/afrique/la-bibliotheque-oumarienne-de-segou?mode=desktop>, <01.06.2023>.

42 Justine Soistier: Provenance of the Archinard collection (Note de provenance de la collection Archinard), 30th September 2021, available from the archives of the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum. This work is based on her university research. See Justine Soistier: De Ségou aux musées français, mise en valeur d’un butin de guerre coloniale XIXe-XXe siècle, master’s thesis, Ecole normale supérieure – Ecole nationale des Chartes, 2021.

43 Procès-verbal de visite et de classement des objets d’or et d’argent provenant de la prise de Ségou, dated 31st May 1890, an inventory drawn up by the commission appointed in Kayes to sort and select the objects from Ségou to be sent to France, kept at the Archives nationales d’Outre-Mer (SOUND I 2 BIS). This inventory includes two lists of 48 gold objects and 48 silver objects. The rest of the seized goods were sold by auction in Kayes.

39 2000-2001: Inventory of manuscripts in the Archinard collection of the Bibliothèque du Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, Islam et Société au Sud du Sahara, nos. 14-15, by Jillali El Adnani. One of the manuscripts was analyzed by Hadrien Collet, researcher at the Institut des Mondes Africains.

40 <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGIARTI000042743608/>, <01.06.2023>.



Figure 4: Jewels from the “Treasure of Ségou”, examined in the museum’s restoration studio, 16th June 2022, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

Africa collections managers and the museum’s conservation-restoration unit (Eléonore Kissel, unit manager, and Céline Daher, scientific analysis officer), in collaboration with Maria Filomena Guerra, director of research at the National Centre for Scientific Research and a specialist in ancient metals. The analyses conducted included examination under an optical microscope and a scanning electron microscope, elemental analysis using an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer and X-ray radiography (Figure 4).

The jewels in the “Treasure of Ségou” are interesting for several reasons. They probably constitute a ‘war booty’. Before being taken by Louis Archinard in Ségou on 6th April 1890, this booty had probably first been seized by the Toucouleur Empire, perhaps during the jihad or ‘holy war’ waged against the Banama kingdoms.⁴⁴ Finally, this jewelry is a unique example of eighteenth-century goldsmithing in this region. Since goldsmiths’ workshops were nomadic and jewelry was very often recast, pieces of Sahelian jewelry from this period are very rare. Following in-depth provenance research, a summary of the mode of acquisition and the historical circumstances surrounding this war booty, its entry into the national collections and its institutional trajectory could finally be summarized in the “Historical Provenance” field of the database for the records of the 20 jewels now held in the museum’s reserves.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Soistier 2021 (see FN 42), 34.

⁴⁵ Inventory numbers: 75.8102, 75.8106, 75.8110.1-2, 75.8111.1-2, 75.8113, 75.8114, 75.8115.1-2, 75.8120, 75.8121, 75.8124.1, 75.8125.1, 75.8133, 75.8139, 75.8142, 75.8148, 75.8159.1-2, 75.8160, 75.8162, 75.8164, 75.8170.1-2.

Database field “Historical Provenance” of the records for the jewels in the “Treasure of Ségou” in the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum database

Historical allocations prior to the collection:

Before April 1890: comes from the town of Ségou (Mali) at a time when the town was under the authority of Ahmadou Tall, son of El Hadj Umar Tall.

Date and circumstances of acquisition:

April 1890: taken in Ségou during a French military expedition led by Louis Archinard against Ahmadou Tall’s Toucouleur Empire.

Itinerary prior to joining museum institutions:

1890-1892: stored at the Magasin Central des Colonies (Paris).

Date and circumstances of entry into the national collections / institutional trajectory:

- 1892: Permanent *Exhibition of the Colonies* (Palais de l’Industrie): property deposited by the Ministry of the Colonies;
- 1910: Musée de l’Armée: property deposited by the Office colonial, registered with the Musée de l’Armée under number;
- 1931: *Colonial Exhibition*: property deposited by the Musée de l’Armée;
- 1932: Musée [permanent] des Colonies: property deposited by the Agence générale des Colonies (successor to the Office colonial);
- 1935: Musée de la France d’Outre-Mer: property listed in the inventory under number AF;
- 1960: Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens: property listed under number AF;
- 1990: Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie: property listed under number AF;
- 2004: Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum: property deposited by the Agence générale des Colonies (successor to the Office colonial), entered in the register of deposits under number 75.

The Talking Drum of the Atchan People of Ivory Coast

The Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac museum has entered into an academic partnership with the Museum of Civilizations of Ivory Coast, focusing on the provenance and conservation-restoration of a talking drum from the Atchan people (inv.-no. 71.1930.5.1). Having become a symbol of anti-colonial resistance, the Republic of Ivory Coast has officially requested that the drum be returned by France in 2019. In response to this request, the President of the Republic and the government have announced France's commitment to the process of returning the drum.⁴⁶ The transfer of ownership of the drum to the Republic of Ivory Coast, followed by its physical transport, will take place once a framework law on the restitution of cultural property has been passed and presented to Parliament.

The partnership entered into by the museum with various actors in Ivory Coast (the Museum of Civilization in Abidjan, the Ivory Coast Ministry of Culture and the Bidjan communities) has a dual objective: to document the history and provenance of the drum and to study its material and technical aspects. Research into the object and its history was carried out collectively by the museum's research teams:⁴⁷ Hélène Joubert, head of the African heritage unit, Gaëlle Beaujean, in charge of the African collections, Aurélien Gaborit, in charge of the African collections, Frédérique Servain Riviale, in charge of collections documentation, Carine Peltier-Caroff, in charge of the images library, Justine Soistier, temporary researcher at the museum, and Lise Mész, deputy director of the heritage and collections department, advisor on the history of the collections. This work is based on the main publications of Henri Labouret and André Schaeffner,⁴⁸

Georges Niangoran-Bouah,⁴⁹ and Konin Aka.⁵⁰

This slit drum, 3.5 meters long and weighing 430 kilograms, known as the “Djidji Ayôkwè”,⁵¹ is a talking drum attributed to the Ebrié people, originally known as the “Tchaman”, who live in south-east Ivory Coast and belong to the Akan ethnic and linguistic group.⁵² It was used to emit sounds over long distances and to send messages, and played a major role in the Atchan people's struggle against French colonization (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Ceremony preceding the restoration of the talking drum in the presence of representatives of the Bidjan communities in the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum storage on 7th November 2022, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

According to information gathered on site in the 1980ies by Georges Niangoran-Bouah,⁵³ an Ivorian ethnomusicologist and researcher,⁵⁴ this drum made in iroko wood was carved in two years in the Anoumabo district of Abidjan by the sculptor Biengui. “After passing through the sacred wood”, the drum was moved to the Adjamé district under

46 Speech by the President of the French Republic at the Africa-France Summit held in Montpellier on 8th October 2021.

47 This section summarizes the results of research carried out by the museum's conservation teams: Gaëlle Beaujean: Internal note, Africa Heritage Unit, 29th October 2018, 2019 and 3rd December 2020; Frédérique Servain-Riviale: Internal note, 2nd December 2020; Lise Mész et al.: Internal note, 22nd November 2021; Hélène Joubert: Internal note, 25th May 2022; Justine Soistier: Internal report, 15th March 2023.

48 Henri Labouret / André Schaeffner: Un grand tambour de bois ébrié (Ivory Coast), in: Bulletin du Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro 2 (1931), 48-52.

49 Georges Niangoran-Bouah: Introduction à la drummologie, Université nationale de Côte d'Ivoire, Institut d'Ethno-sociologie, Collection Sankofa, Abidjan 1981, 151-153, <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb374213862>, <01.06.2023>; Georges Niangoran-Bouah: Le tambour dans la société, in: Exh. cat. Paris (Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 18th October-15th December 1989; Ministère de la coopération et du développement, 1989): Corps sculptés, corps parés, corps masqués, Paris, 191; Georges Niangoran-Bouah: Les Ebrié et leur organisation politique traditionnelle, in: Annales de l'Université d'Abidjan, série F Ethnosociologie 1 (1969), 51-89; Georges Niangoran-Bouah: Le débat sur le tambour parleur, *Fraternité-Matin*, 26th February 1980, 4599, quoted in: Claude-Hélène Perrot: Georges Niangoran-Bouah, *Cahiers d'études africaines* 168 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesafriaines.6181>.

50 Aka Konin: Aspects de l'art musical des Tchaman de Côte d'Ivoire, Africa Museum, Tervuren 2010, 15-18.

51 Its name, given during a christening ritual, means “panther drum”.

52 Mész et al. 2021 (see FN 47).

53 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49):, 187-191.

54 Georges Niangoran-Bouah (1935-2002), former director of the Ivory Coast Museum of Civilizations, ethnomusicologist, professor at the University of Abidjan (director of the scientific department of literature, art, music and musicology).

an apatam (a light construction with a roof made of plants).⁵⁵ The drum was mainly used to transmit political and economic information to remote villages,⁵⁶ and its sound range could exceed 20 kilometers. The iconography, depicting a leopard hurling itself at a lizard and decorated with “war trophies” (severed heads and human jaws), “confirms that this type of drum belonged exclusively to members of the royal family”.⁵⁷

According to the Konin Aka publication:

*“The Tchaman recognized that in the past, after a successful war expedition, the weapons removed and the trophies of the enemies killed were placed in or near the shed that housed it. During the inauguration ritual, the Bidjan organized dances in its honor. At the end of the ceremony, the most important and revered drum in the Bidjan Tchaman group was given the name Djidji Ayôkwé (panther drum)”.*⁵⁸

The date of manufacture of the drum is unknown. An engraving, published in 1900 in a travelogue,⁵⁹ illustrates a very similar war drum, captioned “fétiches de guerre” (Figure 6).⁶⁰ It is thus possible that it was made as early as at the end of the nineteenth century. The existence of similar war drums in the Lagunes region of southern Ivory Coast is unknown to this day. However, an official photograph of Chief Nangui Abrogoua (taken perhaps in the 1920ies or 1930ies, yet certainly before 1938, the date of the chief’s death), probably taken on 14th July, shows him seated behind a drum of the same model (Figure 7).⁶¹ This very similar drum is smaller in size, with four figures and two panthers carved in high relief. According to Hélène Joubert, these smaller proportions could mean that it was a “scale model” made by the sculptor before carving the Atchan community’s talking drum.⁶²

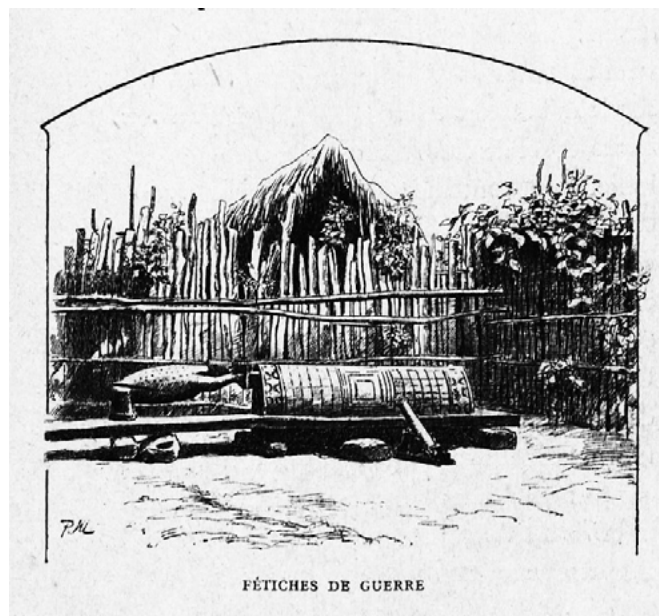


Figure 6: Engraving published in 1900, in: Camille Dreyfus: Six mois dans l’Attîé, un Transvaal français: à la Côte d’Ivoire, Paris 1900, 93, caption: “war fetishes”.



Figure 7: Official photograph of Chief Abrogoua, Chief of the Ebriés and his family (in the foreground the war fetish), 1930-1950, Anon., Côte d’Ivoire, Silver print pasted on card, 11,5 × 17 cm, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, FR ANOM 30Fi50/64.

The first article on the drum, published by Henri Labouret⁶³ and André Schaeffner⁶⁴ in the *bulletin of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro* in July 1931,⁶⁵ refers to the confiscation of the drum from the

55 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

56 Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 49.

57 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 187.

58 Konin 2010 (see FN 50), 16.

59 Camille Dreyfus: Six mois dans l’Attîé (un Transvaal français): à la Côte d’Ivoire, Paris 1900, 93, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k166713x/>, <01.06.2023>.

60 Soistier 2023 (see FN 47).

61 FR ANOM 30Fi50/64, photographie, Abrogoua, chef des Ebrié et sa famille (au 1er plan le fétiche de guerre), 1930-1950; FR ANOM 30Fi50/62, photographie, Le fétiche de guerre d’Abrogoua, chef des Ebrié, 1930-1950; Joubert 2022 (see FN 47).

62 Joubert 2022 (see FN 47).

63 Henri Labouret (1878-1959), ethnologist, director of the Institut international africain (from 1927), professor of Sudanese languages at the École nationale des langues orientales vivantes (1926-1945), professor of African civilization at the École coloniale, Paris (1926-1945). He began his military career in Ivory Coast in the colonial infantry in 1910, and after 1914, when he was wounded, he pursued a career as colonial administrator.

64 André Schaeffner (1895-1980), French anthropologist and ethnomusicologist, senior researcher at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, founder of the ethnomusicology department at the Musée de l’Homme in 1929.

65 Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 48-52.

Ebrié population in 1916 by a colonial administrator named Simon, then commander of the Circle of Lagoons (Cercle des Lagunes). This confiscation is thought to have been a reprisal against the people who, according to two different hypotheses, refused to submit to forced labor linked either to the construction of a road between Abidjan and Abobbo-Té,⁶⁶ or to the construction of the railway. The drum was used to signal the arrival of the settlers in the villages and to enable the men to flee.⁶⁷ Georges Niangoran-Bouah made it a symbol of Ebrié resistance to the French colonial campaigns. According to the Bidjan of Adjamé, administrator Simon organized several “punitive expeditions” against the rebel villages,⁶⁸ but at each operation the Bidjan, once informed, united to resist. When the French military identified the drum as a means of communication, an expedition was launched to confiscate it in Adjamé in 1916.⁶⁹ The soldiers succeeded in removing the drum “at the cost of many casualties”.⁷⁰ The violence of the context in which the drum was acquired is also conveyed by the oral tradition recounted by Guy Djagoua, Bidjan chief and spokesman of the community, during the Ivorian delegation’s first visit to the museum on 25th May 2022. In the words of the elders, “the expedition resulted in hundreds of deaths [...] the tribe broke up” and “the entire socio-political system was destroyed”. According to Guy Djagoua, “the process of returning the drum has brought these communities back together”.

The administrator named Simon has not been identified with certainty yet and no archive mentioning this military operation has been consulted to date. He may have been Marc Simon (1881-1970), a former student of the Colonial School (École Coloniale), who had a career in Ivory Coast between 1907 and 1928.⁷¹ He served as Commander-in-Chief of the Circle of the Lagoons in 1912,⁷² and then as Circle Commander at Tiassalé in 1918. The file

entitled “Indigenous revolts (1908-1912)”⁷³ and the telegrams sent to the office of the Minister for the Colonies in 1916, kept at the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer, do not mention any military or administrative intervention in the region, nor does the French colonial press.⁷⁴ Further archival research is needed to confirm these historical facts. The archives of the General Government of the former French West Africa, held at the National Archives of Senegal in Dakar,⁷⁵ as well as the archives of the circles and the reports of the colonial administrators could help to confirm this identification and the history of this confiscation.⁷⁶

Sent to Bingerville,⁷⁷ the colony’s main town a few kilometers away, the drum was most likely stored outside, in the gardens of the governors’ palace, until 1929.⁷⁸ This hypothesis is inspired by a photograph taken in the governor’s gardens and published by Georges Niangoran-Bouah with the caption:⁷⁹ “Tambour DJIDJI AWOKWE dans les jardins du Palais des gouverneurs à Bingerville. This sacred and venerated object of the Tchaman (Ebrié) has become a toy for this son of a colonist”. The photograph is undated, but it was taken without doubt before 1929, when the drum was sent to France. This is the only photograph showing the drum with the original leopard tail. The latter was probably broken during the object’s transfer to France (Figure 8).⁸⁰

In 1928, the drum was spotted by the writer Paul Morand (1888-1976) during his trip to French West Africa between January and March.⁸¹ Paul Morand wrote to Paul Rivet (1876-1958), then director of

66 Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 48.

67 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

68 Term used by the colonists to justify the armed operation intended to take revenge and punish the colonized populations that were not subjugated. See <https://digitalbenin.org/provenance/1399>, <12.09.2023>.

69 Niangoran-Bouah 1981 (see FN 49), 151.

70 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

71 Marc Simon: *Souvenirs de brousse, 1905-1918*, Paris 1965, 168-169.

72 Joubert 2022 (see FN 47).

73 ANOM, CIV VII 8 Indigenous revolts.

74 Soistier 2023 (see FN 47).

75 <https://francearchives.fr/fr/facomponent/9c00dfdf2972d1dda62f-9f075d895ca91b1bc417>, <12.09.2023>.

76 Mész et al. 2021 (see FN 47).

77 Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 48.

78 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

79 Niangoran-Bouah 1981 (see FN 49), 152.

80 The first photograph of a detail of the drum, taken in France in 1930 at the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, does not confirm this hypothesis, but the following photographs, taken in 1975 and 1984 at the Musée de l’Homme, show the replacement tail, which is currently preserved. PP0114829, taken in 1930 at the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro corresponding to a detail of the object; PP0114828, taken in 1975 at the Musée de l’Homme; PP0093988, taken in 1984 at the Musée de l’Homme, in the musicology room.

81 Paul Morand: *Paris-Tombouctou*, Paris 1928; Archives de l’Académie française, Fonds Paul Morand AP 1-21, this private collection contains no correspondence or photographs of this trip.



Figure 8: Consultation of the talking drum during its restoration with the archive photograph published by Georges Niangoran-Bouah, in: *Introduction à la drummologie*, Université nationale de Côte d'Ivoire, Institut d'Ethno-sociologie, Collection Sankofa, Abidjan 1981, 152, Aubervilliers, 16th November 2022, photograph by Julien Brachhammer.

the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris, which was in the process of being renovated, to draw his attention to the presence of this monumental instrument in the Governors' Palace in Bingerville. Paul Rivet obtained its transfer to the museum in 1929 from the Governor of the Ivory Coast, Maurice Lapalud (1868-1935). He held the post of governor from 1925 to 1930.

The drum arrived at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in December 1929, as evidenced by Paul Rivet's letter of thanks to Paul Morand, dated 11th December 1929, kept in the Rivet collection at the library of the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle.⁸² The object is listed in the inventory of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro under number 30.5.1 with the words "Collection n°5 – 1 object – Governor of the Ivory Coast. Bingerville French

82 Fonds Paul Rivet, Correspondance Paul Rivet-Paul Morand, dossier 2 AP 1 Dc, Bibliothèque du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, consulted on 13th February 2021.

West Africa War drum. Ebrié. Adjamé-Abidjan Ivory Coast AOF Donation".⁸³ The museum's entry register bears the words "donation from the Governor of Ivory Coast". Georges Niangoran-Bouah gives the same account of the drum's entry into the national collections.⁸⁴

In 1930, at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, the drum was exhibited in the "grand vestibule" alongside other monumental works such as the 'Easter Island statue', brought to France by Pierre Loti in 1872 (1850-1923), and the large totem pole donated by the Canadian National Railways.⁸⁵ It was still on display in 1984, in the musicology room of the Musée de l'Homme (Figure 9),⁸⁶ and probably returned to the reserves of the Musée de l'Homme after being presented at the *Sculpted bodies, adorned bodies, masked bodies (Corps sculptés, corps parés, corps masqués)* exhibition at the Grand Palais in 1989.



Figure 9: Photograph of the talking drum exhibited in the arts and techniques room dedicated to musicology at the Musée de l'Homme in 1984, Photograph PP0093988, 22,5 × 29,5 cm, 1984, Christian Lemzaouda, held at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum.

The ethnomusicologist Georges Niangoran-Bouah has published numerous works on the Ebrié people from whom he collected these oral testimonies.⁸⁷ He adds that:

83 MQB-JC D000527/31032 object nos. 30.5.1 to 30.7.10; Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 48.

84 Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

85 MQB-JC DA000011/28424, Outgoing mail 2nd fortnight in June 1930.

86 Print PP0093988, taken in 1984 at the Musée de l'Homme, in the musicology room.

87 Niangoran-Bouah 1969 (see FN 49); Niangoran-Bouah 1981 (see FN 49). Niangoran-Bouah's archives are currently being studied by Francis Tagro, curator of the Museum of Civilizations of Ivory Coast (interview on 22nd February 2021).

“[In] 1958, the Musée de l’Homme sent an ethnologist to Ivory Coast with several photographs of the famous drum. The researcher’s mission was to investigate the origin and function of this piece. He went to Abidjan-Adjamé to talk to local notables to obtain this information. Photographs of the revered drum brought back bad memories for the Ebrié dignitaries and infuriated the local population. The researcher was almost lynched, and was saved only by the presence of Mr Koutouan, a member of parliament. The elderly [men and women] suddenly started shouting war cries. Wailing could be heard everywhere. The Bidjan were paying their last respects to their famous and revered drum, the symbol of their lost independence.”⁸⁸

This information could not be verified and further research is required to document this mission. The Bidjan communities are said to have laid claim to the drum as early as 1958,⁸⁹ a request made to Ivorian President Houphouët-Boigny (1905-1993) to obtain its return from his French counterpart, Charles De Gaulle (1890-1970), but no documentation relating to a previous request for a return has been identified to date.

As part of the academic partnership between the museum and its partners, a material and technical study of the drum was carried out by the museum’s Conservation-Restoration department.⁹⁰ The detailed condition report revealed that the instrument was in a very fragile state, due to former infestations of xylophagous insects. A stabilization treatment was therefore necessary before it could be transported to Ivory Coast. The decision whether to apply a treatment and the choice of protocols and analyses required were the subject of discussions between teams from the Museum of Civilizations of Ivory Coast, the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum and representatives of the Atchan community. The restoration and pedestal operations took place from 14th November to 27th December 2022, with Anne Courcelle, Delphine Berge and Daniel Ibled carrying out the curative treatment and the Aïnu company doing the pedestal work.

⁸⁸ Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

⁸⁹ Niangoran-Bouah 1989 (see FN 49), 191.

⁹⁰ Elsa Debiesse, conservator specializing in ethnographic objects, Eléonore Kissel, head of the conservation-restoration department, and Nathalie Richard, conservator.

The restoration work involved gluing together broken fragments and movable parts, repositioning the tail and fixing it mechanically, reinforcing the lower part of the drum by injecting a consolidation resin, and stabilizing fragile areas. A bespoke base was also created, allowing the drum to be moved without the wood coming into direct contact with the lifting equipment, and enabling the object to be displayed in a stable manner.⁹¹

Following in-depth provenance research, a summary of the drum’s mode of acquisition and historical circumstances, its entry into the national collections and its institutional trajectory were summarized in the “Historical Provenance” field of the museum’s database.

Database field “Historical Provenance” of the record for the Tambour n° inv. 71.1930.5.1 in the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum database

Date and circumstances of acquisition:

Probably October 1916:⁹² the sources are contradictory and do not allow to elucidate the exact circumstances of this object’s acquisition.

Date and circumstances of entry into the national collections:

1930: entered the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro as a donation from Maurice Lapalud, Governor of Ivory Coast.

Institutional trajectory:

1930: Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro: listed under number 30.5.1

1937: Musée de l’Homme: listed in the inventory under number 30.5.1

2005: Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum: listed under number 71.1930.5.1

⁹¹ <https://www.quaibrantly.fr/fr/collections/provenances/tambour-parleur-de-la-communaute-atchan>, 12.09.2023>.

⁹² Labouret / Schaeffner 1931 (see FN 48), 48.

Conclusion

Both case-studies illustrate complex and very different itineraries of war booty and confiscation in a colonial context in Africa. They bear witness to two systems for compiling documentation associated with the objects, and two institutional trajectories which the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum inherited. Each case-study is specific and requires the cross-referencing of written and oral sources that are scattered and sometimes unidentified or difficult to access. The article reviews the current research and scientific partnerships, particularly with African countries. A policy of research into the history of collections is intrinsic to all museum activities. This policy contributes to the necessary introspection into the way in which the collections currently held by the museum were constituted, in particular those relating to seized items during colonial war, as illustrated by the two examples presented in this article.

The challenge for the future is to consolidate a broader and more inclusive policy of forward-looking research, one that is co-constructed with teams of researchers from the countries of origin of the works, and that focuses on common issues and how the different collections entered museums in Europe. Naturally, priority should be given to the systematic review of acquisition methods linked to violent episodes of military conquest during the colonial period or, more generally, objects removed from their countries of origin during or following a period of armed conflict. Nevertheless, the scope should be widened in conjunction with our international partners: missionary collections, ethnographic missions in a colonial context, such as the Dakar-Djibouti mission's counter-investigation project, archaeological objects and the regulatory frameworks governing the archaeological excavations. International cooperation, provenance research and the co-construction of scientific projects are the museum's priorities.⁹³

The ultimate aim of these co-constructed projects is to share them with the public. Therefore, education about the history of the collections and their arrival in our museums is crucial. As a public service, the museum must be irreproachable when

it comes to publishing the results of its research and making its documentation accessible in the interests of transparency.

A number of steps have been taken in this direction and efforts must be continued:

- accessibility of all inventory registers,
- research guides and sources aimed at all audiences,
- web content developed on the history of the collections with object biographies, thus enhancing contemporary practices linked to traditional practices and collaborative projects with indigenous communities,
- explicit and intelligible labels on the provenance,
- dedicated publications published online in open access.

It is essential to pool the expertise of researchers, historians, archivists and museum professionals in the countries of origin of the artefacts, in France and also in European countries with the sole aim of sharing and making accessible the history of humanity's common heritage.

⁹³ As its President Emmanuel Kasarhérou reminded us in 2023. In: *Le Figaro*, October 3rd 2023, 33.

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Reference

Lise Mész: History of the Collections of the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum. Context, Methodology and Current Research, in: *transfer – Zeitschrift für Provenienzforschung und Sammlungsgeschichte / Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection* 2 (2023), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48640/tf.2023.1.101808>, 155-173.