



Berlin, 27. June 2022

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Foundation Board clears the way for returns to Namibia and Tanzania**

– Check against original text in German –

23 objects of the Ethnological Museum are to remain permanently in Namibia - agreement on returns to Tanzania also possible

#### **Namibia**

23 objects from the collection of the Ethnological Museum of the National Museums in Berlin can remain permanently in Namibia. The Board of Trustees of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, chaired by Minister of State for Culture Claudia Roth, authorized SPK President Hermann Parzinger on Monday "to conclude an agreement with the responsible authorities in Namibia in due course on the whereabouts of individual or even all objects."

As previously reported, the objects had traveled to the African country at the end of May as part of the partnership research project "Confronting Colonial Pasts, Envisioning Creative Futures" with the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN) and are to be researched there. The items include historic everyday objects, jewelry, tools and fashion. The project, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation, is based on cooperative provenance research with experts\* from Namibia in Berlin.

"We know how significant these objects are for Namibia. They are very early pieces, of which there are no comparable objects left in Namibia itself because of the violent colonization. If we now return these objects permanently, we will support our Namibian partners in reconstructing the history of their country," says Hermann Parzinger.

#### **Tanzania**

The Foundation Board also authorized the President to enter into an agreement for the return of objects from Tanzania that have been identified as war booty from the Maji-Maji War and other wars since the colonial conquest.

These war booties, as well as other holdings from Tanzania, have been the subject of collaborative projects with partners in Tanzania in recent years, including colleagues at the University of Dar-Es-Salaam and the

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National Museum of Tanzania. The pilot project "Tanzania/Germany: Shared Object Histories?" was dedicated to researching the provenance of colonial-era holdings from present-day Tanzania. It concluded with a traveling exhibition, which was also shown at the Maji Maji Memorial Museum in Songea. Currently, further research collaborations are underway to deepen the understanding of provenance and significance of the holdings from Tanzania, such as the projects "Collaborative Provenance Research on Collections from Tanzania at the National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam and the Ethnological Museum Berlin" (in collaboration with the National Museum of Tanzania, the University of Dar es Salaam, and Humboldt-Universität, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation) and "Contested Property" in the DFG Collaborative Research Center "Affective Societies," which focuses primarily on objects from the Maasai people.

For the opening of the East Wing of the Humboldt Forum in September 2022, an exhibition will be dedicated to a critical examination of the Tanzania collection and will shed light on its colonial-era contexts. The objects from the Maji-Maji War and other violent contexts of appropriation are expected to be shown in 2024 as part of a presentation on the "History of Tanzania," which is currently being developed together with partners\* from Tanzania, in particular the National Museum of Tanzania. Both sides agree that the events of Tanzania's colonization and the Maji-Maji War, which are largely forgotten in Germany but play a major role in Tanzania's public consciousness, should be brought closer to the German and international public in this way. Subsequently, they will be returned to Tanzania.

Hermann Parzinger: "Since we agree with our partners that these objects from Tanzania, which were appropriated in a clear context of violence, should not remain permanently in Germany, I am pleased that the Stiftungsrat has now authorized me to conclude an agreement on repatriation with the responsible authorities in Tanzania."