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PRESS RELEASE

Foundation Board clears the way for the return of the Ngonnso' to Cameroon

– Check against original text in German –

Parzinger: Object is regarded by the Nso' as a mother deity and has great spiritual significance for the society of origin

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At its meeting today, the Foundation Board of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation authorized SPK's president Hermann Parzinger to conclude an agreement with the relevant authorities in Cameroon on the return of the so-called Ngonnso'.

The female figure known as Ngonnso' originates from the historical Kingdom of Nso' in northwestern Cameroon and came into the collection of the Ethnological Museum of the National Museums in Berlin in 1903 as part of the donation of the colonial officer Kurt von Pavel.

After several years of contact with representatives of the Nso' and the government of Cameroon, the exchange on Ngonnso' intensified last year, partly through the mediation of Ms. Sylvie Njobati of the civil society initiative "Bring Back Ngonnso'". In December 2021, representatives of the Ngonnso' community in Cameroon and Germany, museum representatives and scholars from Germany exchanged views on the history of provenance and the significance of the Ngonnso' for the Nso'. Together, they ascertained that the Ngonnso' had not been removed from Kumbo, the capital of the Nso' kingdom, through looting in the course of acts of war. However, von Pavel's stay in Kumbo, even in the absence of actual hostilities, was an expression of unequal power relations and structural, colonial violence because he was accompanied by soldiers and armed porters intending to have an intimidating effect on the Nso'. In addition, the Ngonnso' has a central role for the Nso', as she is considered a mother deity. Due to these circumstances, the SPK Foundation Board followed the foundation's president's recommendation to initiate the return of the figure.

SPK's president **Parzinger** welcomed the decision: "The decision makes it clear that the question of returning collection items from colonial contexts is not just a question of a context of injustice. The special - especially spiritual - significance of an object for its society of origin can also justify its return. We will now work with the Republic of Cameroon and the representatives of the Nso' to shape the restitution process."