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VOICES ON DECONTEXTUALIZED HERITAGE

THE CASE OF TANZANIA

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Colonialism as a sociocultural and economic historical episode, just like the predecessor systems including slavery and feudalism, has left many and diverse footprints to be reckoned with by generations to come, in both the colonies and their masters.[1] Some of these impacts, especially economic and political ones, have been widely discussed on political, economic and history platforms; others have been addressed only marginally or not at all. I focus here on that second category, examining heritage resources—expropriated from colonies such as German East Africa by various agents during the colonial period—that are today either displayed in museums or still wrapped and stored in warehouses in the colonizer countries of Western Europe and beyond. Voices across the globe have challenged the justification and even legality of keeping such resources out of their original context. This chapter presents the perspectives of Tanzanians.

A combination of research methods, including personal observation and informal interviews with university students, academics, villagers, town dwellers, and museum workers conducted during the first half of 2019 in Dar es Salaam and Morogoro, eastern Tanzania, have revealed four different schools of thought regarding what to do with heritage assets expropriated from Africa in general, and Tanzania in particular, during the colonial period. In the following, I offer some context before setting out these four strands, which I refer to as Eurocentric, radical, liberal, and reparation-oriented approaches. This taxonomy, I argue, may also be applicable for the rest of Africa and indeed the entire colonized world.

COLONIAL MUSEUM HERITAGE: A GROWING DEBATE IN TANZANIA

Mainland Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika), like most countries in Africa, has a colonial history. It is among a few African countries that passed through the hands of more than one colonial master: the Germans and then the British. German rule started immediately after the Berlin Conference in 1884–85 and continued up to the end of the First World War, when the British took over until Independence in 1961. During this period of three-quarters of a century, Tanzania lost countless items of heritage value through appropriation and export, plunder, misuse, mishandling and general decontextualization. Although all these processes are equally destructive and indeed are closely related, this chapter focuses on the

Fig. 16.1
The Makonde mask Kijana Mtanashati, now know as 'Handsome Boy', was stolen from the National Museum of Tanzania in the 1980s. It was later found in a private museum in Switzerland and then returned to Dar es Salaam in 2010.

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented to the conference *Looted Art, Cultural Heritage, National Property? Objects between Law and Morality*, organized by Evangelische Akademie Tutzing, Germany, February 8–10, 2019. I am grateful to the organizers for inviting me and bearing the costs of my participation in what proved to be one of the best conferences on the subject. A second version was presented as a public lecture on April 9, 2019, at the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Dar es Salaam. I am thankful to all who have shared their comments with me.

appropriation of heritage resources, including cultural and natural objects as well as human remains, and their exportation out of Tanzania.[2] This was done sometimes randomly, sometimes systematically, by a number of agents—including colonial officials, researchers, missionaries, army officers, and amateur collectors—either with or without the blessing of the colonial government at the time. Evidently, few resources were acquired through peaceful means such as purchases or gifts, or through excavation; most were obtained through wars or other forms of violence.

The German colonialists expropriated a larger proportion of these resources than the British, despite their shorter stay in Tanzania. A number of factors contributed to this disproportionate activity, the most important being that the Germans had a specific policy encouraging and regulating what they called "ethnographic collection." A dedicated museum was established in Berlin, the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde (Royal Ethnological Museum), to house collections from the colonies. Guided by the infamous paternalistic philosophy of helping Africans, the Berlin ethnologists perceived their activities as "salvaging … the 'material and intellectual property' of African societies … considered to be under threat of complete destruction, due to colonial expansion and the associated adoption of 'modern' lifestyles."[3] Their aim was to collect "as many 'authentic' objects as possible, above all from societies that allegedly showed the least signs of cultural 'contamination' or change, thereby putatively saving them."[4] To understand this process, it is important to bear in mind that German ethnologists at the time construed Africans as ahistorical—as *Naturvölker* or "natural peoples," who were "believed to be the starting point for developing an understanding of the fundamental mental traits of so-called 'complex' societies, the *Kulturvölker* (cultural peoples)."[5] Despite the weaknesses and partiality of this model, it is fair to say that the Germans had the privilege of interacting with what we may call an unadulterated indigenous heritage, and that they expropriated the best representatives of authentic African material culture.

Of course, the Germans were by no means the first Europeans to interact with people living in the area known today as Tanzania. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, the travel log of an anonymous Greek voyager in the mid-first century CE, reveals lucrative transoceanic commercial interactions at the famous market of Rhapta, at an estuary on the east African coast.[6] The most persuasive historical and archaeological accounts locate Rhapta at the mouth of the Rufiji River, midway down the coast of Tanzania.[7] This long commercial history shows that Greeks, Romans and Persians had visited this area more than two millennia before it became German "property." Later on, the Arabs and Chinese joined in, before the Portuguese, led by Vasco da Gama, arrived around the middle of the second millennium CE.

According to surviving evidence, in none of these encounters were the foreigners interested in appropriating heritage resources; they only sought commercial items such as minerals, animal products, and even human beings—as slaves. Interest in heritage resources, whether cultural and natural or human remains, is recorded for the first time, and on an alarming scale, during the period of German colonialism.

Examples of the natural heritage resources acquired by the Germans include the remains of several dinosaur species dated to the late Jurassic period, 145–150 million years ago, which were excavated by German researchers at Tendaguru, southeastern Tanzania, between 1909 and 1912 and shipped to Germany. The most famous of these specimens is the *Giraffatitan brancai* now displayed at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. Among the items of cultural heritage are Makonde masks such as those collected and exported to Germany by Karl Weule in the mid-1900s;[8] human remains include the head of Mkwavinyika Munyigumba

2 Human remains are regarded here as being both cultural and natural, depending on the purpose of the appropriator, which admittedly is not always easy to establish. For example, when exported for scientific reasons (such as the comparative measurement of brain size), human remains might be categorized as more natural, but when the skull of a powerful opponent is taken for revenge, that is more cultural.

3 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence," 66.

4 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, 66–68.

5 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, 68.

6 Casson, *Periplus Maris Erythraei*.

7 Chami, *African Ancient History*.

Mwamuyinga, Chief of the Hehe, dispatched to Germany in the late 1890s,[9] and the arguable head of sub-chief Songea Mbano of the Ngoni, discussed later in this chapter.

Even today, we remain uncertain of the exact magnitude of such exportation in terms of numbers. Attempts at quantification have yielded only rough estimates, running to tens of thousands. A portion of the items have been displayed at one point or another in museums across Germany, but the bulk is yet to be unpacked from boxes or removed from stores.[10]

Perhaps surprisingly, despite the substantial loss of heritage resources incurred during the colonial period, there was less protest from Tanzania during and immediately after the struggle for independence on this matter than on the subject of economic losses. Exceptions include the successful campaign in 1954 for the return of the skull said to be that of Mkwavinyika Munyigumba Mwamuyinga, and the return in 1965 of the skull of Zinjanthropus (*Australopithecus boisei*) and some archaeological materials that had been collected by Louis and Mary Leakey at Olduvai George and taken to Kenya in the name of scientific analysis.

After the mid-1960s, the return of expropriated objects seems to have lost momentum. It resurfaced during the late 1990s, when the National Museum of Tanzania mounted efforts to get back materials stolen from its displays in 1984, having learned that some of the stolen objects had reappeared in a private museum in Switzerland. The museum's struggle bore fruit in 2010, twenty-six years after the theft.[11]

It is worth noting that the apparent lack of impetus for return characterizes not only the institutions responsible for the custodianship of heritage resources, such as the National Museum of Tanzania and the Department of Antiquities, but also school curricula. Although colonial history forms an important component of the history curriculum in Tanzania in primary, secondary and tertiary education,[12] there is no mention of topics around heritage expropriation or restitution.

Nevertheless, there has been a notable shift in popular discussions over the past two decades. Politicians, scholars, antiquities and museum professionals, and increasingly also the general public are beginning to express more serious concern about the loss of heritage resources during the colonial period. Perhaps the most striking example of political intervention occurred in early January 2019, when the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism dissolved the board of the National Museum with immediate effect. He had discovered that the board had failed to properly supervise the museum in implementing government directives, including those of the Minister himself. In his dismissal speech, the Minister reminded the board that in late 2017, he had directed the museum to ensure that Tanzanian heritage resources, including the Tendaguru dinosaurs housed in Germany, should be returned. More specifically, the Minister had asked the National Museum, as a corporate body, to negotiate with their counterparts in Germany and have a replica made of the large dinosaur (*Giraffatitan brancai*, formerly known as *Brachiosaurus brancai*) displayed at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. The cast, along with fossils of smaller dinosaurs from Tendaguru that are still in boxes, were to be returned to Tanzania. The Minister's directive was not implemented, hence the stern measure.

In view of the relative indifference shown by earlier generations, one wonders what has happened in the recent past to arouse such interest in expropriated heritage. A brief analysis reveals a number of factors, the first being the government's decision to move the Department of Antiquities and the National Museum from

8 Blesse, "People on the Ruvuma." For illustrations of Makonde masks, see pp. 94, 95, 100–103.

9 As David Ngassapa explains in his edited volume *Mukwavinyika Mwamuyinga na Kabila Lake la Wahehe*, on August 17, 1891, seven years before his suicide in 1898, Chief Mkwavinyika Munyigumba Mwamuyinga, popularly referred to as Mkwawa, had inflicted a severe defeat on German troops including their commander Emil von Zelewsky, nine other Germans, and about three hundred other soldiers. He remained undefeated for three years before he was attacked in 1894 by the German army. Mkwawa then resorted to guerilla warfare for four years. Ngassapa, *Mukwavinyika Mwamuyinga*, 97–103. G.C.K. Gwassa notes that the German governor, von Liebert, offered 5,000 rupees for Mkwawa's head. Nobody could claim the reward because he shot himself in June 1898 when a German patrolman, Sergeant Merkl, approached his hideout. Merkl cut off Mkwawa's head. According to contemporary reports, the skull was later sent to Germany. After the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles laid down that the skull be returned to the Hehe, though this was not fulfilled until 1954, with the help of the last British Governor of Tanganyika, Sir Edward Twinning. Gwassa, "The German Intervention," 115.

10 Ivanov and Weber-Sinn, "Collecting Mania and Violence."

11 The return of the mask in May 2010 was celebrated by the National Museum of Tanzania as well as the Parliament, and received wide coverage in the mass media (especially newspapers and television). A scholarly analysis can be found in Shyllon, "Return of Makonde Mask" and Masao, *Museology and Museum Studies*, 57.

12 Tanzania Institute of Education, *History Syllabus for Secondary Schools*.

the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. Implemented in 2002, this decision awakened interest in cultural tourism, especially in the two institutions, but also in the country as a whole. This is because tourism, the core business of the Ministry, is one of the nation's key revenue earners, contributing over 9 percent of GDP.[13] The higher profile achieved by the change of responsibility boosted interest in heritage resources as tourism attractions, pushing the Department of Antiquities and the National Museum to begin searching for heritage materials stored outside Tanzania. This factor is certainly underpinned by the growing interest in cultural tourism globally.[14]

The second factor was the centenary of the Maji Maji War in 2005–7. It will be remembered that the introduction of German colonial rule in Tanganyika, or Deutsch-Ostafrika, was not a smooth process. The local people fought fiercely and shed their blood in resistance to foreign domination. I have already mentioned the resistance of the Hehe under Mkwawa; another case, and by far the fiercest, was the Maji Maji War. The war started in Umatumbi and lasted for two years, from 1905 to 1907. About fifteen ethnic groups joined forces to expel the Germans, but ultimately they were defeated. Several factors contributed to this, but the two outstanding ones were the disparity in military technology and the German deployment of inhumane martial techniques. The local people, fighting with spears and arrows, were no match for the Germans with machine guns and cannon, so they soon switched to guerilla warfare. Being familiar with the landscape, this worked well for them. But the Germans, driven by their zeal to colonize the area and not prepared to be halted by Africans, resorted to the merciless, scorched-earth strategy that subjected the local people—infant and elderly, able-bodied and disabled, men and women alike—to starvation, then mass deaths, leading some researchers to call the Maji Maji War a genocide.[15]

Such defeats notwithstanding, resistance has always been an important theme in Tanzania's colonial history. Tanzanians have always taken pride in the Maji Maji War and cited it as proof that colonialism is an evil human experience. Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, for example, in his statement to the United Nations Fourth Committee in December 1956, described the Maji Maji War as follows:

> The Germans, with characteristic ruthlessness, crushed the rebellion, slaughtering an estimated number of 120,000 people … . 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 … 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. It is important to bear this in mind … in order to understand the nature of a nationalist movement [TANU] like mine.[16]

It is on account of its significance for the country's history that the war's centenary was commemorated in 2005–7. The centenary celebrations renewed interest in the war among Tanzanians, and that raised the related issue of restituting expropriated heritage resources. Thus, discussions among the Ngoni of Songea, southern Tanzania, one of the ethnic groups that fought the Maji Maji War, centered on the return of the skull of their sub-chief, Songea Mbano. The Ngoni allege that the skull of Mbano, who was hanged separately after more than sixty others, including Chief Mputa Gama, were hanged together and buried in a mass grave, was taken by the Germans and is still stored somewhere in Germany. This matter has still not been resolved. Despite formalizing an *utani* relationship with the Germans in 2018,[17] the Ngoni continue to struggle without avail to get the skull of their sub-chief back.

The third factor in the renewal of restitution efforts is the new awareness of colonial history within Europe. Recently, European museums have shown greater

13 World Travel and Tourism Council. "Economic Impact Reports." https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact.

14 Lwoga, *Tourism*, 111.

15 Rushohora, "Archaeological Identity of the Majimaji." Rushohora has also published a book in Kiswahili specifically on the Maji Maji War as a genocide: *Tafakari ya Vita ya Majimaji na Mauaji ya Kimbari 1904–1908*, loosely translated as "A New Thinking on the Majimaji War and Genocide 1904–1908."

16 Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 40–41.

17 *Utani* can be loosely translated as "joking relationship." This is a common practice in Tanzania, by which individuals or groups of people not related by blood agree to establish a relationship stronger than that of best friends. Several factors can lead to *utani* between groups, the most important of which is prolonged war between them; in this case, *utani* becomes a means of reconciliation. Once established, the *utani* relationship is inherited. During the 2018 commemoration of the Maji Maji War, held on February 25–27 every year, the Ngoni, under their symbolic Chief Emmanuel Zulu Gama, launched an *utani* relationship with the Germans as represented by the then German Ambassador to Tanzania, Egon Kochanke. This signified the ceasing of wrath and any form of vengeance, actual or potential, that existed or would exist between the two parties and the beginning of a fresh, peaceful relationship.

interest in dealing with their colonial past, and have experienced greater political pressure to do so. As a result, a number of research projects have been conducted in collaboration between the former colonialists in Europe and their respective colonies in Africa, with the aim of establishing the proper contexts of some of the objects expropriated during the colonial period and located today in European museums.

A good example of such collaborative research is the Humboldt Lab Tanzania project in Berlin.[18] Through the project, Tanzanians including scholars, heritage professionals, artists, and others have been invited to visit museums in Germany that house heritage collections from Tanzania and other German colonies. The author, who unfortunately has not been among the visitors, has nevertheless been lucky enough to meet and talk with some of the guests, who confessed that before the visit they did not know that such collections existed, let alone their scale. While they appreciate the invitation and marvel at the richness of the holdings, they remain ambivalent about the future of the collections.

The project also involved three temporary exhibitions focusing on photographs from colonial-era research. Two were mounted in Dar es Salaam (the first at the National Museum and House of Culture, and the second at the University of Dar es Salaam); the third was held at the Maji Maji Memorial Museum in Songea. The exhibitions made a sample of expropriated objects visible to a large Tanzanian audience. Again, in the midst of appreciation for this exposure, ambivalence reigned. Questions abounded: Why send us photos instead of the real objects? When are they going to return our objects?

In the next section, I offer some answers to these and similar questions that reflect what Tanzanians wish to hear from their heritage scholars, researchers, and managers.

THE RETURN AND DISPLAY OF EXPROPRIATED OBJECTS

The discussion on expropriated heritage resources centers upon their return to Tanzania. Influenced by the factors outlined above and a number of others, the demand for these resources to be returned has become a common call right across Tanzanian society, whether school pupils or college students, villagers or town dwellers, academics or politicians. Politicians are the group who, more than the others, have taken the lead recently, both in inquiring about translocated heritage and in fighting for its restitution. This trend has been reinforced by debates in the National Parliament, which gained momentum during the Maji Maji centenary and have since been escalating even more. It was such political pressure that led to the Makonde mask stolen from the National Museum in Dar es Salaam in 1984 being returned in 2010 (see Fig. 16.1). Likewise, the last consignment of archaeological materials excavated by Louis and Mary Leakey at Olduvai George and other places in Tanzania since the 1930s were brought back from Kenya to Tanzania in 2011. Both the National Museum and the Antiquities Department knew long before the 2000s that such materials deserved to be returned to Tanzania, but they took no firm action until Parliament mounted pressure for the assets' return.

It is fair to say that Tanzanians as a whole advocate the return of all expropriated heritage resources, whether natural, cultural, or human remains. This position is arguably supported by UNESCO through its World Heritage Convention of 1972, which, among many other principles, opposes the decontextualization of cultural heritage.[19] There is no doubt that African heritage materials housed in

18 More information on the project can be found in its publication, *Humboldt Lab Tanzania*, edited by Lili Reyels, Paola Ivanov, and Kristin Weber-Sinn. The book is a multilingual production in English, German, and Kiswahili.

19 UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, art. 4 (Paris, November 16, 1972). https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf.

museums in Germany and other Western countries are of dubious provenance. More seriously, most such materials are misinterpreted. For example, across the former colonizer countries in Europe, Germany included, one finds cultural materials exhibited in 'art museums.' The underlying assumption, and the impression conveyed to visitors, is that artifacts such as anthropomorphic masks or figurines were produced for art's sake—yet artistic or aesthetic as they may look, most of them were ritual objects used for religious purposes. Some of them should not be displayed for public viewing: the right to view them is restricted to certain, specially designated people.

Admittedly, this heinous decontextualization occurs not in European museums alone, but also in their African counterparts, including the National Museum of Tanzania.[20] The main reason for this failing is that the concept of the museum as applied today came to Africa as part of a colonial package.[21]

Before colonialism, some communities had their own forms of institutions resembling the museums of today, but these were organized and administered differently. Objects displayed in these establishments were mostly sacred or otherwise highly valued, such as regalia or materials with historical value to the community in question. Community members felt privileged when they were able to view such objects, and in some cases viewing rights were discriminatory.[22]

However, most museums across Africa today were established during the colonial period, guided by European principles and paradigms and addressing European visitors. Ethnographic objects displayed in these museums, for example, were certainly a source of amusement or admiration to Europeans, but not to the local people, the producers or users of the objects.[23] And buffalo or oryx horns exhibited in a natural history museum would be less entertaining to a local person than to a foreigner.

Having been victimized by both neocolonialism and globalization, African museum experts have continued to embrace European criteria and frameworks at the expense of the indigenous African cultural principles that would be more appropriate to this type of display. This has contributed to a sense of alienation from museums among local African people, who consequently fail to appreciate the importance of museums and lose interest in visiting them.

PERSPECTIVES ON RETURN

Let me now turn to the more specific views of some Tanzanians regarding the translocated objects. I conducted an informal research project between January and April 2019, aiming to collect opinions from Tanzanians on what they think should be done with the cultural and natural heritage materials of Tanzanian origin that were expropriated during the colonial period and are still in the hands of the former colonial masters in Europe.

I interviewed 94 people from a wide range of backgrounds, 82 of them face-to-face and 12 by telephone. The interviewees included university students (42), museum workers (2), university lecturers (9), villagers (7), and town dwellers whom I met on the streets, in the informal meeting spaces known as *vijiweni*, in Morogoro and Dar es Salaam (34). Morogoro and Dar es Salaam were chosen for the sake of the researcher's convenience; the choice of the informants' profiles was dictated by the intention to capture the views of ordinary citizens as opposed to those of official groups such as politicians, museum curators, antiquities officers, or heritage management scholars. I had already interacted with members of the official

20 Maligisu, "National Museum of Tanzania."

21 Masao, *Museology and Museum Studies*, 37–39.

22 This approach can be discerned here and there across the volume edited by Van Wyk, *Shangaa Art of Tanzania*, and is most vividly presented in Van Wyk's own chapter, "The Metal Regalia of Karagwe," 217–23.

23 Maligisu, "National Museum of Tanzania," 20.

groups beforehand, in meetings, conferences, and conversations, or heard their views through the media. Their opinions were considered when constructing the perspectives listed below.

Based on these surveys, I identified four schools of thought among present-day Tanzanians regarding expropriated heritage assets. Three of these advocate the return of the materials, but differ in approaches; one, a minority view, argues for the status quo. The four viewpoints are as follows.

Status Quo or Eurocentric Perspective: The advocates of this perspective wish the materials to remain in Europe and not to be returned to Tanzania. They argue that Tanzania will not do justice to the materials because it is not financially capable of conserving them properly. Though it was wrong to translocate them, the objects are safe in the West. In addition, the cultural objects have lost their original spatial, social, and cultural contexts irreversibly—and it will not be possible to recreate those contexts even after the materials come back. Informants pointed out that some materials displayed in our own museums are not treated with adequate care. "Let us start by improving what we have, before we get back those from Europe," one said. This stance aligns with the preference of most European museums that possess African objects, and can be called a Eurocentric perspective.

Radical Perspective: The second school of thought comprises those who would like the materials to be returned right away, unconditionally and without discussion or excuses—whether or not Tanzania can already afford the proper technology to handle them. They argue that since the objects were in the villages anyway when the Germans took them, there is no reason to worry about fancy setups today. Moreover, the materials were taken by force without the owners' consent, and in Europe they are detached from their cultural context. One informant asked: "How can a thief be granted time to discuss whether or not to return stolen property or to ask the owner to prepare space for it? Is it not obvious that upon return the object will be placed where it was before it was stolen?"[24]

Liberal Perspective: This school of thought would like to see the translocated materials returned after Tanzania has proved itself capable of handling them. Even though the materials came from Tanzania and contextually belong to Tanzania, these informants believe that after expropriation, the objects acquired an international or universal value. Their safety is thus of paramount importance, taking priority over ownership or provenance. These people would like the government to establish a proper environment for the objects (structures, air-conditioned rooms, display platforms) similar to those in Europe before they are returned to Tanzania. If not, the materials might be subjected to irreversible and highly regrettable damage or loss.

Reparation-Oriented Perspective: The fourth perspective shares a good deal with the liberal perspective, in the sense that both want Tanzania to prepare a conducive environment before the materials are returned. However, proponents of this view have a different opinion on who should shoulder the costs of transportation and setting up the receiving environment. They would like to see the cost of preparing the environment in Tanzania shared equally by the two parties and the cost of returning the materials to be borne by Germany. The justification they give is that the materials were appropriated by Germans without the consent of Tanzanians, and since we now know that what the Germans did was wrong, it should be their moral and ethical obligation to return the objects and help Tanzania to conserve, protect, or display them as it sees fit. The argument rests on the knowledge that some of the heritage resources have been producing income through admission fees while in Germany, so the Germans should share a portion of that income by paying

24 In discussion, this particular informant used the example of a stolen television set to illustrate his point.

for transportation and assisting with the cost of preparing to receive the items. This school argues for Europeans to indirectly compensate for damage they caused to African cultural heritage, and can correctly be called a reparation standpoint.

DISCUSSION

Before concluding the chapter, I would like to present some cautions that will need to be taken into account whichever form of restitution is chosen. We must bear in mind that repatriating the heritage resources is just the beginning of a long journey toward full appreciation of their sociocultural and scientific value. For one, having been uprooted from their original locales more than a hundred years ago, the objects have become alien to their onetime owners. An example would be a ritual Makonde mask, used for boys' initiation ceremonies, that was confiscated by a German soldier at Nanyamba village, Makondeland, in 1905, and exported to Germany. If it is now returned to Nanyamba, what will become of it? Will it still bear the sacred status it commanded 117 years ago? Most certainly not. That is because the precolonial cultural systems that otherwise would have been responsible for transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next, all the way to the present, were interrupted along the way by colonialism and imported religions, a problem subsequently compounded by globalization, science, and technology. Together, these have either completely erased the crucial memories or have irreversibly replaced the functional values of the objects in question. If we want the Makonde mask to regain its lost value, we must take on the difficult challenge of educating its rightful heirs before handing the object back to them. Without such education, we run the risk of losing its meanings forever.

This is even more challenging for natural objects collected in the name of scientific research. Consider *Giraffatitan brancai*, for example, excavated in Tendaguru in the western wilderness of Lindi town, southern Tanzania. If the fossil is returned to Tanzania, should we take it to Tendaguru and rebury it, or erect a structure, such as a museum, on the spot and display it there? In fact, most of those who advocate the return of the *G. brancai* skeleton think of placing it in Dar es Salaam, or perhaps Dodoma. Would that be a fair solution? Definitely not, though at least it would be closer to the original location than Berlin.

There is yet another level of complexity regarding excavated natural materials, whether paleontological or anthropological. As paleontologists and taphonomists know, organic (and some metallic) materials, once buried or sunk under water, undergo a transformation process at a 'balanced' rate, regulated by nature itself. But as soon as such an object is removed from its natural matrix, the decaying process accelerates. Most often, expensive scientific and technological interventions are required for the object to last outside its natural environment of decay. This must have happened to *G. brancai* as well. The question then is: To what extent is the *G. brancai* standing in the Berlin Museum of Natural History 'original'? One could go further and note that even the name has changed from *Brachiosaurus brancai* to *Giraffatitan brancai*. In my view, the form of the heritage resources at the moment of their expropriation is what should matter when determining the fate of translocated objects.

Finally, return of the objects will often prove to be problematic for practical reasons. In such cases, the idea of making replicas, as suggested by the Tanzanian Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, could be adopted, though with a slight modification: whereas the Minister, aiming to be diplomatic, suggested that the country of origin take the casts and the appropriators retain the originals, I would propose the reverse distribution.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has revealed four different perspectives on the question of what to do with heritage assets expropriated from Africa, specifically Tanzania, which I have labeled 'status quo,' 'radical,' 'liberal,' and 'reparation-oriented.' Each stance is backed by a number of arguments, hopes, and demands. It is now time to select the best. Personally, both as a researcher and as an African, I subscribe to the fourth school, whose rationale I find most convincing. Although it is important to return the objects to their places of origin, we also need to accept that they have now acquired the status of a shared or universal heritage. It is therefore crucial for the two parties involved to contribute collaboratively to the protection of these heritage assets for future generations.

I appeal to museum curators both in Europe and Africa to conduct serious research on the functional contexts of the cultural objects on display in their museums, and where necessary to rename their museums and restructure their displays so as to reflect the cultural messages that were intended by the original users. Thus, religious or sacred objects could be placed in special locations and subjected to restrictive access. Special curators, selected and approved by the relevant cultural authorities, could control this access. Visitors allowed by the customs governing the viewing of such objects should be the ones granted access and should be required to pay higher admission fees than the regular fee.

As for natural heritage objects, these are currently exhibited mostly in museums of natural history, and are not historicized. Viewers are encouraged to appreciate them only in their specificity; even the historical processes by which they were translocated are not provided. This needs to change. Rather than being left to guess, visitors should be offered explanations regarding both the natural environment from which the objects were taken and the circumstances that brought them to where they are now. This important information would help the viewer to acquire a holistic scientific and sociocultural understanding of each natural object. Complicated as it may sound, this remains the best way of doing justice to both the objects and the visitors by communicating the true cultural value of the objects. ■

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