

# Restitution and Archaeological Collections in Africa FREE

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## Summary

By outlining the features, we can affirm that the construction of identity in each country is generally based on—and accompanied by—the definition of what constitutes “heritage” in its territory. On the African continent, this process was not uniform at the time of the proclamation of independence, or at least it did not always follow the same dynamic. It is clear that the heritage issue is approached in different ways depending on the period. In fact, it has gone through several phases in which the emphasis is placed in turn on the magnificence of the power in place, the popular recognition of symbols that can testify to national unity. For the past two decades, the states, strengthened by their achievements since obtaining independence, and in parallel with the creation of new emblematic monuments, have adopted, with respect to their former colonizers, an obvious desire to recover looted property. These objects, taken out of the territory not only by the hands of the colonists but also by missionaries or art lovers in various circumstances, become political instruments capable of bringing public opinion together. Thus, the restitution of African heritage goods, exhibited in foreign museums, to their countries of origin, amounts to recovering—and (re)discovering in a concrete way—a part of community identity that was thought to be lost forever. This process, which, through the cultural component, is in fact redrawing the balance between the countries of the North and South. Benin is setting itself up as a model in the implementation of heritage strategies based on the return of goods and their conservation and valorization in situ. Other countries are following suit.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage, African identity, illicit traffic, stolen objects, archeological research, restitution

**Subjects:** Archaeology

When in 2000 the case of the Nok terracotta (Nigeria) acquired by France and planned to be exhibited in the future Musée des Arts Premiers in Paris made the headlines, one was far from imagining that it would have, as one of its epilogues, the restitution of objects of African heritage to other countries or at least the formulation of the demand for restitution by the latter with different outcomes depending on the case, both in terms of political management and the reaction of the populations. The dynamics, which have caused an isolated case, which could therefore have remained limited to a few objects and one country, to become generalized at the global level, deserve a lot of attention for at least one reason: they are leading (or are advancing concomitantly) to a total rewriting of African history. This occurs through a reversal of point of view, often summarized in the “decolonization of thought” that gives rise to attitudes that are sometimes radical and sometimes moderate, all not without contradictions, toward what appears to be an act that is not only legitimate but also due.<sup>1</sup> What are the reasons behind this?

The hypotheses we put forward to answer this question derive from the analysis of a few case studies from West Africa and mainly the Republic of Benin: each of them is, in our opinion, significant because they explore and highlight, in turn, the processes (institutional, bureaucratic, etc.) of restitution, the position of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the role played by the individuals or groups involved, and so on. And beyond the reactions that are different from one case to another, what do they tell us as a whole? What issues do they raise? The Nok example, to which we will return, allows us to examine fundamental issues: the crossover between the quest for identity, the sense of belonging to a nation or group, to a culture, rootedness, and so on; the critical look at the implementation of government policies (or, on the contrary, the silence or even concealment of certain facts) likely to enhance the stakes often hidden in simple objects; or the consequences of the processes initiated by individuals and their reception of the actions undertaken by governments in terms of restitution and conservation.

Convinced of the impossibility of generalization, and therefore of the need for a case-by-case analysis of the steps to be taken toward restitution, the article explores the variety of realities in African contexts and attempts to identify the similarities and differences encountered at the continental level in approaches to archeological collections, existing university-level archeological training, and the presence of local professional archeologists.

### **A Museum Policy Tinged with Illicit Trafficking of Objects**

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So it was in April 2000 when President Jacques Chirac inaugurated the Pavillon des Sessions in the Louvre: this ceremony marked the entry into this prestigious building, until then reserved exclusively for Western artistic and cultural production, of objects from extra-Western material cultures, selected by Jacques Kerchache.<sup>2</sup> These come from distant lands whose cultures—and works—are judged and designated as *primitive* by the Western artistic Ghot. Their entry into the collections of the Parisian museum would have remained a “beautiful feast” had it not been for the presence, in one of the rooms of the institution, of these three Nok terracottas.<sup>3</sup> Yet Nigeria had ratified the convention on January 24, 1972, which entered into force on April 24 of the same year. Thus, the export ban was already in force if Nigerian laws had been enforced. In addition, international conventions such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property were also meant to protect them.<sup>4</sup>

In January 2000, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) published a red list of African archeological artifacts that were particularly obtained by looting. This publication was part of ICOM’s International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM) program and followed a workshop on the protection of African cultural heritage held in Amsterdam from October 22–24, 1997. Although the Nok(s) terracotta are on the ICOM red list, three of them were nevertheless purchased by France in 1998 from a Belgian antiquities dealer. Although there has been an attempt to legitimize this sale by the French government through the signing of an alleged cooperation agreement between the French and Nigerian parties, this agreement was denounced by the Nigerian Embassy in Paris.<sup>5</sup>

The polemic that arose from this affair revealed the flaws and weaknesses of the texts in the face of the ambitions and desires of people in power. The conclusion of this episode of the Nok's polemic was the mitigated solution found to bring the two parties to an agreement: Nigeria would remain the owner of the three works bought by the Quai Branly, but the French museum would keep them in deposit until then, for twenty-five years renewable (de Roux 2006).

This misadventure is just one example of the fate to which African cultural heritage objects seem destined. Moreover, the passionate debates that restitution has generated in the last decade in scholarly circles are not unrelated to the “decolonization of thought” movement, of which Sarr and Savoy's (2018) book is the most recent—and arguably best-known—manifesto. This has given new impetus to the desire of formerly colonized populations to free themselves from Western thought, namely its account of historical facts and the way it imposes itself on the rest of the world.<sup>6</sup> The unbolting of the statues we witnessed in 2020, and announced by several acts of vandalism over the last few years against painful symbols reminiscent of colonization, is another form of expressing “enough is enough.”

### Restitution Under Conditions

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The issue of restitution touches on delicate balances of a political and economic nature, and museum directors and the supervisory ministries are doing their utmost to safeguard—and even justify—this imbalance, which is based on a worldview that sees “the West and the rest” as separate (De Palma 2019). Inspired by universal encyclopedic art museums such as the British Museum, they maintain the following position: their collections are not the instruments of an (ancient) empire but the testimony of tradition. Antiquities would be universal and, therefore, a public heritage, intended for encyclopedic museums of the world such as the Louvre and the Getty, whose mission is to host representative examples of the artistic and archeological heritage of humanity, thus highlighting the connections between cultures and promoting a universal heritage of which they would be the defenders. In De Palma's opinion, UNESCO's policies and also the laws of each country in support of restitution to the countries of origin favor a form of nationalist culture in which antiquities are used solely to serve the purpose of a nation (De Palma 2019).

Another argument that is often mobilized refers to the lack of means, and therefore maintenance and security, of museum infrastructures in Africa to adequately house the exhibits.

In order to better understand the issues raised by the question of restitution, it is important to understand archeological research in Africa and its history. A retrospective review of the work enables us to understand the factors that promote or inhibit the development of archeology on the African continent. It also helps to identify areas of the discipline and regions of the continent where gaps and/or efforts need to be made. While the earliest archeological evidence was collected by amateurs, that is, missionaries and other colonials, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, research only began around 1923 with the arrival in South Africa of Europeans such as

John Goodwin and in East Africa, around the 1920s, of Louis S. Leakey. In West Africa, the arrival of J. Desmond Clark and Thurstan Shaw, who worked mainly in Ghana and Nigeria, marked the beginning of real archeological excavations.

But if the archeological interest of North Africa was earlier because of its geographical position and certain cultural aspects, notably the Roman presence, as far as the rest of the continent is concerned, the research carried out was initially limited to prehistoric deposits and rock art. It was not until the struggles for independence of African countries that research was also directed toward the study of the origins of precolonial cultures and states. The tasks of archeological research in Africa are enormous because of the shortage of professionals in this field and the threats of destruction hanging over archeological sites that have hitherto escaped land-development work, the looting encouraged by the major international traffickers in antiquities, and the short-sightedness of political decision-makers. As for the management structures for archeological heritage, they exist and have weaknesses in terms of the means of intervention to draw up inventories, to protect threatened sites, or to carry out rescue or emergency excavations.

However, over the last four decades, significant progress has been made with the birth of specialized departments in new universities and in older ones with the creation of teams of nationals, and with the rationalization of international missions. Efforts are being made in some countries of the continent (Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Republic of Benin) to update the legal arsenals for the protection of heritage, both buried and above ground. A long march preceded these recent achievements in archeological research on the continent.

## The First Discoveries

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The late 19th and early 20th centuries correspond to the period of imperialist expansion of the European powers in Africa and the establishment of their colonial administration. Thus missionaries, officers of the pacification armies, administrators, doctors, and so on, during their tours, were interested in the curiosities and archeological finds, and particular in lithic assemblage. These first clues to the existence of African prehistory were brought to the attention of the learned societies of the metropole. In Algeria, a colony of settlement was quickly established. During the development phase of the colonies, opportunities to locate or uncover archeological deposits multiplied. These missions were also favorable to the discovery of numerous prehistoric sites. The possibilities offered to prehistoric research would be a favorable factor for the arrival of certain archeological professionals (Shaw et al. 1993).

## The Pioneers of Scientific Research and the Teaching of Archeology in Africa

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It was the invasion of Egypt by French troops led by Napoleon Bonaparte (1798–1801) that marked the starting point for the scientific study of this brilliant ancient civilization. The scientists who accompanied the expedition were deployed throughout the Nile Valley and their work resulted in the *Description of Egypt (1809–1813)* in the style of scientific exploration trips.

It was in the 1920s that South Africa saw the arrival of the first professional archeologists: J. A. H. Goodwin (1923), a former student of Miles Burkitt (Cambridge), Louis S. B. Leakey (1926), Graham Clark, and J. D. Clark. Raymond Vauffrey (1927) was sent from Madagascar to North Africa by his professor Marcellin Boule (director of the Institute of Human Palaeontology).

In West Africa, Thurstan Shaw came to the Gold Coast in 1937, assigned as a teacher at Achimota College. In Nigeria, Bernard Fagg arrived in 1939 as Assistant District Officer. In 1938, Théodore Monod arrived in Dakar and took over the organization of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN), within which an archeology-prehistory section was created, entrusted to Raymond Mauny in 1947.

The progress of the studies highlighted the need to facilitate the comparison and exchange of prehistoric data with those of Quaternary geology and paleontology. To facilitate these contacts, Louis and Mary Leakey organized the first Pan-African Prehistory Congress in Nairobi in 1947.

In Africa, archeological research has developed from museums and/or research centers under the authority of universities. In West Africa, the IFAN has undoubtedly played a leading role from Dakar, in terms of investigation in the territories under its charge. The territories particularly favored were Sudan, Senegal, and Guinea (Conakry). Very early on, archeology acquired an academic status in the Gold Coast with the establishment, in 1951, of the Department of Archaeology in the University College of Legon, headed by the Englishman A. W. Lawrence. Also noteworthy was the arrival in 1952 of Oliver Davies, an archeologist by training who was interested in the prehistory and geology of the Quaternary period on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea. At the museum administration level, a former employee of Shaw, Richard Nunoo, began excavations as early as 1945–1946.

In Nigeria, Thurstan Shaw was recruited in 1963 as Professor of Archaeology at the Institute of African Studies in Ibadan. But it was not until 1970 that a department of archeology was established. At the independence of Nigeria and Ghana, many English and American archeologists were recruited to reinforce the work of the pioneers: P. Ozanne, D. Colvocoressi, G. Connah, F. Willet, R. Soper, J. Sutton, and N. David. After independence, too, scholarship became a means of renewing research programs. Young American and English researchers were recruited. There was thus a boom in archeological research. The Ghanaian government put large sums of money into research before the Akosombo dam and called upon foreign practitioners because of the insufficient number of native technicians. It was not until the 1970s that the first African archeologists were trained: Bassey W. Andah trained at Berkeley in the United States in 1972, followed by Ekpo Eyo in 1974 and E. K. Effah Gyamfi in 1978.

The teaching of archeology at the University of Dakar was gradually introduced in the 1960s and the first workcamps were organized in Mauritania. The history and archeology departments of the new French-speaking universities (National University of Benin, University of Ouagadougou, University of Abidjan, University of Dakar) introduced archeology and/or prehistory courses in the 1970s.

Countries such as Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia, Chad and Somalia do not have their own research structures and appear as *terrae incognitae*. Research 'is' carried out there mainly by foreign missions, mainly from Europe or America.

In East Africa, it is mainly museums that have served as a support base for resident researchers. University teaching and research are very recent there, except at Makerere University in Uganda. In Kenya, for example, it was only in 1977 that the first archeologist defended his thesis. It was J. C. Onyango Abuje. Similarly, at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, there is an archeological research unit run by expatriates.

In South Africa, it was the arrival of the British archeologist Ray Inskeep at the University of Cape Town in 1960 that gave impetus to a massive training of white South African archeologists. In the 1990s, academically trained professionals occupied many of the positions then offered by the museums, antiquities departments, and the new archeology departments that were opened at various universities in South Africa and Namibia.

In Central Africa, the establishment of the International Centre for Bantu Civilisations with its headquarters in Libreville seems to have given a new impetus to archeological research carried out by specialists in the region.

Cameroon appears as an active research focus from the University of Yaoundé. There are also autonomous research centers in the country.

In Madagascar, it is the University and its Museum of Art and Archaeology that are the basis of investigations on the big island. The periodical *Taloha* publishes the research carried out.

In the Cape Verde Islands, archeological and anthropological research is very recent. In 1997, the country established the National Cultural Institute, which is responsible for research.

These few examples taken from the African continent show how much archeological research depended on work carried out by expatriates from the colonial period until very recently. External donors very often still influence and direct research, especially the subjects and regions to be studied. Moreover, archeological theories and approaches have for a long time been little reconsidered by teachers and researchers on the African continent.

Thus, the accession to independence of several African countries has not made them entirely autonomous in terms of material and financial resources for archeological research. Also, a large number of the most significant archeological finds have been taken away by expatriate researchers under the pretext of undergoing in-depth analyses in Western laboratories, which the African countries lacked. These objects, for the most part, were never returned to the countries that owned them.

## Between Ignorance on the Part of Some and Bad Faith on the Part of Others: A Heritage Never Returned

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Before the establishment of local archeological research teams in most African countries, research was carried out and funded by Western universities and institutions (including some museums). The results of the excavations that were carried out as well as the artifacts that were discovered were most often known only to the members of these teams composed exclusively of expatriates and their sponsors. The most important objects were then taken away and found a place in Western museums or in the collections of unscrupulous collectors. The least important items were deposited in the museums of the looted countries. They ended up in cardboard boxes, covered with dust in the darkness of a storeroom under the more or less uninterested or casual control of a curator who did not know what to do with them.

### The Impossible Exhaustiveness of an Inventory

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The question of the restitution of archeological collections is complex in many ways. Some of the items taken away by expatriate researchers are in fact not listed and are not at all known to researchers in the countries of origin. This initial difficulty in identifying the objects and their countries of origin is one of the obstacles that must be overcome when talking about restitution. The need for an exhaustive inventory is crucial in order to determine the quantity of objects, their origins, and destinations. In this respect, the question is where to start research if one does not know the type of archeological furniture being sought.

The report by Didier N'Dah (2019) on the destruction of sites caused by major development works in Benin shows that some archeological sites have been systematically destroyed since 2007 and that the objects unearthed by the workers are taken away by the companies in charge of the works. These are mainly foreign companies, mostly Chinese in this case. On reading this report, the question that arises is whether a state that attaches little importance to archeological excavations, especially the need to carry out an inventory of them during public development works, seems serious enough to claim archeological looting objects on its territory.<sup>7</sup>

The relative youth of archeological research units in many African countries could in many ways be seen as a weakness, since the resources available to these research teams are derisory. They must essentially rely on external funding, which generally defines the nature of the research to be carried out in relation to the fields of interest of the organizations or universities of the North. In the Republic of Benin, for example, the work on the archeological site of Agongointo discovered during the layout of a road was almost entirely financed by Danish organizations. Indeed, in 1998, as part of the construction work on the Abomey–Kétou road bypass, excavated structures were uncovered and were the subject of archeological research through the Benin–Danish Archaeology Project (BDarch), which made it possible to study several archeological sites in the Bohicon–Abomey–Dogbo–Aplahoué region. The excavation work was almost entirely directed by a Danish team headed by the late Klavs Ransborg. Some Beninese researchers and students were at times admitted to the research team, but the conduct of the work was almost tacitly devolved to the

Danish team. Gradually, the populations of the region (Abomey-Bohicon) and the political-administrative authorities ended up associating this Danish team with the archeological excavations in the territory of the two cities. The publications of the work and the creation of an archeological museum section (notably on the research carried out by the team) inside the historical museum of Abomey by the Danes, testify to the important place that this team has managed to gain in the region and in the country.<sup>8</sup>

This is not the only case in which a foreign archeological team or an expatriate archeologist “imposes itself” in an African country. Some even end up making it their own. The objects discovered are therefore taken to the research units of these expatriate researchers for supposedly analytical purposes and are not returned to their country of origin. In addition, when these countries do not have archeological research teams, it is difficult to think of returning the objects taken away, especially as most of these artifacts are not well known to local researchers in general.

It is easy to imagine how frequent this was during the colonial period, when almost the entire administration was led by Western expatriates. How many archeological objects were taken away? What were they? What was done with them? These are essential questions that deserve serious investigation if any restitution of archeological collections to the African continent is envisaged.

Archeological collections are of crucial importance in writing the history of a community. In Africa, they are all the more important as many societies are considered to be oral societies. And the absence of a certain form of writing makes it difficult to reconstruct the historical fact. Archeology is of great help in this writing, provided that we have the documents that bear witness to this history. When they are in Western museums, far from the context that produced them, it is almost impossible to reconstruct an exact historical framework of the societies in which the pieces were created.

Archeological sites have been identified in Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. These sites are dated from prehistory to historical periods. Indeed, sites dating from the Oldowayan and Acheulean periods have been discovered in Burkina Faso, south-western Niger, in the Falémé Valley in Senegal, at the Farabana site in Mali and at the Ondjougou site in Mali.<sup>9</sup>

Middle and Upper Paleolithic sites have been discovered in the Gobnangou Mountains in south-eastern Burkina Faso, including a lithic industry resulting from the Levallois cutting technique consisting of Levallois blades, bifacial retouch points, denticulate, and scrapers. Numerous sites belonging to this period have been discovered and studied between the Niger River and the border with Burkina Faso, as well as in the Mekrou Valley on the border between Benin and Niger.

Anthropic mounds and archeometallurgical sites have also been located in the Sahara and Sahel countries.<sup>10</sup> As examples we have the archeometallurgical sites of Do Dimmi, Termit and Aîr in Niger.

In some West African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Benin, archeological research has identified and dated several sites. Stone tools dating back to the Oldowayan period have been identified at a few sites scattered from the present forest region of Nigeria to the Sahara. Pebble

sites have been discovered at Yapei in northern Ghana. Acheulean sites have also been identified on the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria where hundreds of bifaces were discovered in alluvial deposits as a result of tin mining. In Benin, lithic pieces dating from the Acheulean were also discovered at the Kumaaku site near Korontière.

Sites from the Middle and Upper Paleolithic as well as from the historical period (anthropic mounds, archeometallurgical sites, ruins of ancient villages, etc.) have also been located in these different countries and have been the subject of archeological work.

In the Republic of Benin, formerly Dahomey, on the basis of documentation relating to the use of precious stones by the Dahomeans, Father Bertho undertook investigations in 1944 among the populations of South Mono. He was thus led to identify three missing villages whose origins were unknown. The first is 1.9 mi. north-west of Comè, the second 1.9 mi. from Sè and the third between Kpinou and Hindé. In 1945, he reported the discovery of slag deposits, the most important of which is in the vicinity of Pobè and another to the north-west of Aplahoué.

Thus, when Raymond Mauny published his *Current State of Our Knowledge of the Prehistory of Dahomey and Togo* in 1950, he remarked that “a review of the material reported or collected to date in Togo and Dahomey will be easy to do, because it is very short.” (1950, 5). Therefore, the list of new remains to be added to those already reported by Enzo de Chélat consisted of two polished axes and two stones with biconical perforations found in the Perma gold mine, and a polished axe, a few cylindrical wheels, small flat wheels recovered by Tidjani Serpos in the vicinity of Allada. To this inventory were added some polished axes stored in the Musée de l’Homme in Paris.

## The Interest of African Professionals Focused on the Recent Past

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Over the last five decades, archeological research in Africa has been characterized by a shift in the interest of researchers in more recent periods of human history on the continent. This evolution of archeological investigations toward historical times is to be attributed to the demand of the newly independent states of Africa. This demand corresponds to a need to restore the cultural identities of the various peoples of the continent who have been stripped of their initiatives (Houénoude 2018). Archeology is one of those social disciplines that make it possible to reconstruct the human past, particularly for periods that go beyond collective memories. During the colonial period, any progress or cultural change in Africa is interpreted as the action of a diffusion or impulse or migration coming from outside Africa or elements originating outside the continent.<sup>11</sup>

These external impulses were identified as early as the end of the Stone Age, particularly during the Iron Age, and especially through contact with Arabs across the Sahara, the Arab–Persians on the eastern coasts, who would have been the civilizing ferment of the African peoples.

Instead of the depreciative ideology of triumphant imperialism, research substitutes facts for myths. These advances in archeology in Africa are only possible thanks to the qualitative leap that has been made both in terms of methods and new research orientations. This research greatly

needs to rely on the material productions of African societies that are still alive or that have disappeared. But when these material productions are owned by Western museums, this becomes problematic. It is then paradoxical that some European leaders deny that Africa is sufficiently part of history or that it is not a historical part of the world, when the elements to write this history are in their possession and they refuse to give them back. As A. Godonou (2007) observed, borrowing the expression used by Aimé Césaire (2021) in his *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955/2021), the “dishonest equations” are not behind us. This blatant bad faith is summed up in the question posed by Peter Ucko:

How has it been possible for knowledge about the past of such a vast continent as Africa, full of diverse complex and innovative cultures spanning many thousands of years to have been relegated so ignominiously to universal neglect within the consciousness of world public education?

(Shaw et al. 1993, 34)

## Between Evolutions and Losses: The Reorientation of Archeological Research

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Of course, there are problems, and these are at several levels. The most serious problems are those of the lack of financial support for archeological research by nationals. External subsidies, particularly bilateral ones, often put African researchers in a humiliating situation of dependence or even guardianship. Research equipment is often insufficient or not renewed. Career uncertainties added to the various difficulties mentioned above are likely to discourage vocations among young people. The number of African archeologists is insufficient.

Moreover, the different legislations for the protection of cultural and natural heritage are inadequate and are poorly or not at all enforced, leaving the way open for the looting of sites and illegal exports of African antiquities and fossils.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Africa’s historical and archeological heritage is shrinking without having been studied in depth. This entails an irretrievable loss for science in general and for the history of civilizations in particular, as mentioned above.

Finally, despite the enormous difficulties encountered, prehistoric, archeological, and historical research has profoundly changed the level of knowledge and the place of the African continent in the history of humanity. It has brought to light many little-known or forgotten civilizations and provided many details about known entities, but whose cultural specificities and economic and social achievements remain unclear. A better knowledge of the archeological material held in Western museums and their study by the yardstick of African archeology could make it possible to reconstruct these little-known parts of the continent’s history.

In order to better understand the dynamism of African civilizations from the inside, starting from material cultures, the methods applied to African archeology are becoming more demanding. Multidisciplinary approaches are the norm and aim to achieve interdisciplinary analyses. Thus, archeological collections in the last decades constitute a valuable source of information for the entire community of African researchers to nourish their studies on the continent.

### Links to Digital Materials

Fight illicit trafficking, return & restitution of cultural property [.<https://en.unesco.org/fighttrafficking>](https://en.unesco.org/fighttrafficking)

Trafficking Culture. Researching the global traffic in looted cultural objects [.<https://traffickingculture.org>](https://traffickingculture.org)

ICOM International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods [.<https://www.obs-traffic.museum/>](https://www.obs-traffic.museum/)

The British Museum is full of stolen artifacts [.<https://www.youtube.com/watch%3Ftime\\_continue=2%26v=hoTxiRWrvp8%26feature=emb\\_logo>](https://www.youtube.com/watch%3Ftime_continue=2%26v=hoTxiRWrvp8%26feature=emb_logo)

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### Notes

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1. See in this respect the numerous works of French- and English-speaking authors such as Felwine Sarr, Achille Mbembe, and others.
2. Jacques Kerchache (1942–2001), a great enthusiast and collector of African art, was a dealer in primitive arts, then an exhibition organizer, technical adviser to L. S. Senghor and J. Chirac on museum projects for black arts and civilizations.
3. The Nok culture developed in Nigeria on the Bauchi plateau (in the center of the country) and in the Katsina and Sokoto regions (in the far north).
4. Nigerian Prohibition Law on non-exportation of antiquities, Government decrees of 1974 and 1979; National Commission for Museums and Monument Decree no. 77, 1979. Article 7 of the convention stated that “at the request of the State Party of origin, to take appropriate steps to recover and return any such cultural property imported after the entry into force of this Convention in both States concerned, provided, however, that the requesting State shall pay just compensation to an innocent purchaser or to a person who has valid title to that property. Requests for recovery and return shall be made through diplomatic offices.”
5. See *Le courrier de l’Unesco* 2001, 19.
6. On this subject, let us recall Jack Goody’s book (Goody, 2006), *The Theft of History*, published by Cambridge University Press and translated into French in 2010 by Gallimard under the evocative title: *Le vol de l’histoire. How Europe Has Imposed the Narrative of Its Past on the Rest of the World*.
7. N’Dah 2019.
8. Denmark is also a country very present in Benin as a donor in many fields (agriculture, education, road) through its cooperation agency DANIDA (Denmark’s development cooperation).
9. They refer to two lithic industries of the Lower Paleolithic.
10. The Sahara extends largely to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan.
11. Andah 1995.
12. Objects of art from antiquity or ancient times.