

III.

Managing, Using and Researching Objects
in Collections

Becoming Ethnographic Objects

Three Rattles from East Africa in the Ethnographic Collection
at Göttingen University and their (Missing) Stories

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Hannah Stieglitz

Abstract

There is more to say about a rattle than that it is a rattle. In her article Hannah Stieglitz traces the documentation on three East African rattles in the Ethnographic Collection of the Georg-August-University Göttingen and the stories revealed. By questioning how the rattles of the Wagogo, the Wanyakyusa and the Wafipa became objects of the collection, it becomes clear that the knowledge preserved is fragmented and tells us more about the collectors than the collectables. It is shown that three seemingly similar objects have been classified in differing ways in relation to these collectors. The gaps in the documentation refer to the absence of stories which enable the questioning of the processes of (colonial) knowledge production.

Devenir des objets ethnographiques. Trois hochets d'Afrique de l'Est dans la collection ethnographique de l'université de Göttingen et leurs histoires (manquantes) (Résumé)

Un hochet n'est pas seulement un simple hochet. Dans son article, Hannah Stieglitz présente trois hochets d'Afrique de l'Est dans la collection ethnographique de l'université Georg-August de Göttingen, ainsi que les histoires qu'ils révèlent. En se demandant comment les hochets des Wagogo, des Wanyakyusa et des Wafipa sont devenus des objets de collection, il apparaît clairement que les informations recueillies sont fragmentées et nous renseignent davantage sur les collectionneurs que sur les objets de collection. Nous constatons que trois objets apparemment similaires ont été classés de manière différente en fonction de ces collectionneurs. Les lacunes dans la documentation renvoient à l'absence de récits qui permettent de remettre en question le processus de production de connaissances (coloniales).

Introduction

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.¹

Chimanda Ngozi Adichie

In her well-known Ted talk on “the danger of a single story” Adichie found an inspiring way of elucidating how speaking and hearing about *others* establishes realities which are bound to power relations. What we know and what we think there is to know about *others* is dependent on the narratives constructed about them. Adapting her thoughts to cultural artefacts in collections, I suggest that ethnographic objects from colonial contexts become representations of the colonised *other* that are constituted in discursive practices in which some stories are established at the cost of others.

The Namibian designer and researcher Cynthia Schimming gave impressive insights in these processes when she shook a whole room of conference participants with her narratives on objects from Namibia in the Ethnographic Museum Berlin in July 2019.² Taking them on an “emotional journey”³ she showed that the ethnographic objects in the collection had once been

personal things involving individual persons, who had made them, appreciated them, lived with them, and were attached to them. In the cases shown in her presentation people had things taken from them in situations of colonial structural and direct violence. After the Panel she was giving her talk in, she elaborated in an interview: “I think I actually spoke about how these objects are haunting you: How bad it was of people to take objects, giving them the wrong names or even no names at all, giving them numbers, not telling us where they come from, who brought them and how they got them”.⁴

When things become part of a collection as objects, something happens. As objects they “do not have essential and stable meaning(s)”.⁵ In processes of cultural construction and knowledge production, they are negotiated as representations of what is to know about the world depending on perspective and time. They are removed from one place and brought to another, they become (re)interpreted, conceptualised, categorised, inventoried, labelled, ordered, stored and/ or exhibited. Their manifold meanings are created by the stories told and those untold or missing and strongly depend on who is narrating and on who is listening.

In this article I focus on three East African rattles with colonial provenances in the Ethnographic Collection of the Georg-August-University Göttingen. First, I will explicate why of all things I am writing about the Wagogo, the Wanyakyusa and the Wafipa rattle as they became objects of interest in the context of a research exchange initiated by the PAESE Project in 2019. After then giving some information on the historical context of the collection itself and the corpus of available sources I will discuss the material on the three rattles one after another. I will show that in the collections` documentation on these objects diverse stories can be explored and many are missing. While interpretations from the societies of origin linked to the objects and their history are absent in the sources of the collection, we can trace ways of how they became ethnographic objects. There are stories about the people and practices related to the collectors, donators and institutions linked to this process. The practices of creating knowledge on these rattles can be seen as part of a discourse which is also crucial for understanding colonialism and colonial contexts as past politics and as a living past. Thinking about the processes, practices and people who produced the archived documents in and on the collection rather than looking at them as objective things, enables us to question the making of colonial knowledge⁶ and the gaps we experience in provenance research.

Why Rattles? Becoming Objects of Interest

In 2019 I was part of the PAESE research exchange and got to work, amongst other inspiring people, with Flower Manase, curator for the history department at the National Museum of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam.⁷ She visited the Ethnographic Collection in Göttingen and together we unpacked and looked at objects from colonial contexts – among them the three rattles – which originated in East Africa, specifically in today's Tanzania. We exchanged perspectives on the objects themselves and looked at the knowledge kept and produced in the collection's documentation.

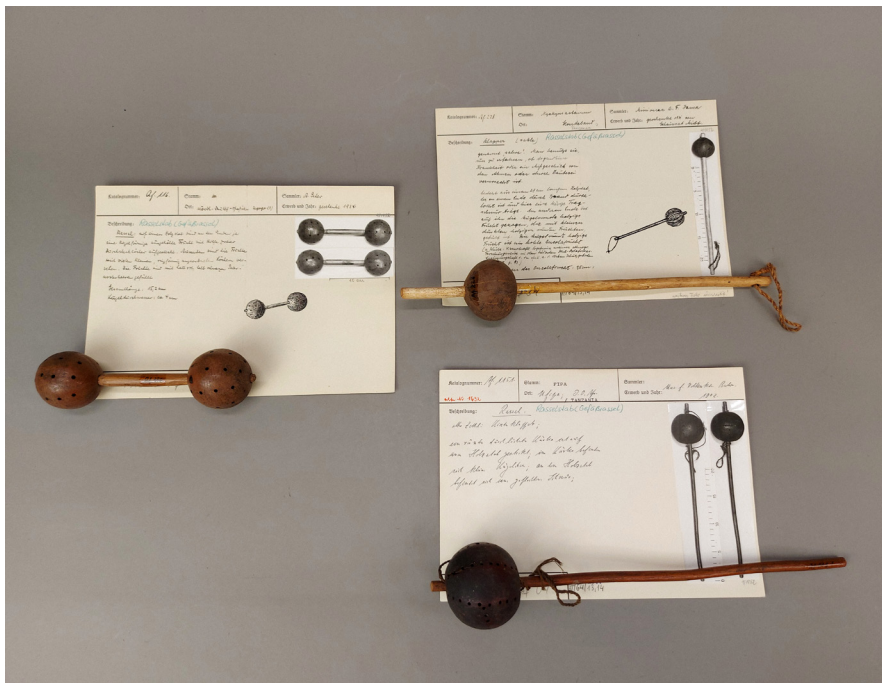


Figure 1 | The three East African rattles © Ethnographic Collection of the Georg August University Göttingen, Inventory Numbers Af 116, Af 1151 and Af 228 © Ethnographic Collection, Georg August University Göttingen (Photo: Hannah Stieglitz)

When the three rattles lay on the table, they seemed comparable. Because they were all rattles, they all came from today's Tanzania and their shapes and materials are similar. But they did not just happen to be there. I had selected them among 45 other objects from today's Tanzania in preparation for the research exchange to provide a list of objects to work with. In this process I wanted to choose a range of objects that could represent the Tanzania holdings of the Ethnographic Collection. The goals were to give insights in the collection's holdings and documentation, to yield differentiated perspectives on colonial contexts and provenance research in the collection and give as many inducements for discussion as possible. Therefore, my selection criteria were diversity oriented: I wanted to portray the variety of object categories and materials, the heterogeneity of contexts in which objects were made and appropriated and in which they became objects of the collection in Göttingen as well as the variability of documentation status and extent. In order to do so I tried to include objects from different categories, collectors/ donators, different materials, things that I thought might be comparable somehow (like the rattles), things I knew had a conflictive background (such as a bow which was taken as war booty in the *maji maji* war or a *kiboko* whip) or such things I didn't really know anything about but I was sure were embedded in colonial contexts.⁸

When Flower Manase came to Göttingen she chose from this list and, among other objects, the three East African rattles became objects of interest as part of present research and collaboration practices at the Ethnographic Collection Göttingen. Their stories are yet to be retold. But before presenting the findings from the rattles' documentation, I think it is crucial to contextualise them in the historical embeddedness of the collection they are part of today and the available sources related to their stories.

Researching Stories in the Ethnographic Collection of the Georg-August-University Göttingen, Germany

The Ethnographic Collection is part of a whole landscape of academic collections at Göttingen University.⁹ Today approximately 18 000 objects define the collections inventory. They were made, used, collected or donated, sold, or gifted by a vast variety of people and institutions with diverse agendas and interests. Its long history goes back to the 18th century when the Royal Aca-

dem Museum was founded as a University Museum in 1773. In this institution collections from various departments, which have developed into distinct disciplines today, were gathered as materials for academic teaching and research. As the university disciplines had not yet been separated as clearly as they seem to be today and Social and Cultural Anthropology had not yet been institutionalised as an independent subject at all, the Ethnographic Collection was cared for among other collections by physicians, geographers, and zoologists. Until today it is mainly known for convolutes from the times of enlightenment deriving from the South Seas (“Cook/Forster Collection”) and the Arctic polar region (“Baron von Asch Collection”) obtained by the director of the Royal Academic Museum Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840).¹⁰ Since then, items from all over the world have become objects of this collection via manifold ways. Different collecting practices were pursued, and possible, different bureaucracies were in place shaping discourses on (ethnographic) knowledge, but it was until 1928, when “Völkerkunde” was first taught as a distinct university subject by Professor Hans Plischke (1890–1972). During his tenure colonial revisionism was especially articulate in the “Institut für Völkerkunde” at Göttingen University as its members then actively debated connecting ethnographic research with (regaining) German colonial ambitions.¹¹ Plischke was drawn to Göttingen from the Grassi Museum in Leipzig not at last because here was the opportunity to perpetuate the Ethnographic Collection and shape it as the first ethnographic expert in charge. Due to his influence the collection was moved into a new building in December 1936 which was inaugurated as a museum and meant as a place for academic research and studies as well as a place for public education on “Bildungswerte der Völkerkunde”.¹² The rattles and the sources related to their entrance in the collection are mainly related to these early eras as their dates of entrance go back to 1902, 1931 and 1934.

In order to work with its holdings today there is a variety of tools and sources that enable insights on individual items, convolutes and related persona in the Ethnographic Collection Göttingen. For my selection of items in 2019 I used the inventory catalogue listing the Africa holdings of the collection, the inventory cards of the individual objects, archival materials and documents as well as the collections’ databases to select objects for the research exchange. While the preprinted inventory cards were introduced during the process of rearranging the collection in the course of its move to a new building in 1935/36,¹³ the inventory catalogues were published in the 1980s and early 1990s¹⁴ and each of them lists the objects deriving from one continent in a table.

The inventory catalogue listing the collections holdings from Africa and basic information on these objects is structured by cardinal regions (North Africa, Northwest Africa, Northeast Africa, etc.), then nation states and “undefined” (e.g., “East Africa undefined”). The objects assigned to a state are then categorised in so called “functiongroups”. It is highly probable that the information in the catalogue was transferred from the inventory cards but for both documentations it is very rarely possible to tell who exactly worked on what kind of information and when. Prior to both systems the old index system withheld the information deemed important and has been preserved. The latest date for an object entry in this system refers to a purchase in 1936. The archival materials used for this research could mainly be found in two of nine folders containing a conglomerate of historical documents from object lists to correspondences or historical labels. One of them is dedicated to purchases 1927–1935, as the other holds a chronicle of the collection 1868–1935.¹⁵

Tracing the leads of the collection’s documentation on the three East African rattles we can question the revealed information as institutionalised knowledge. Despite the gaps and insecurities in the sources there are stories that can be told, enabling us to learn about ways in which knowledge has been created.

Finding Stories – Documentation Status of the Wagogo, the Wanyakyusa and the Wafipa Rattle¹⁶

The Wagogo Rattle

The rattle with the Inventory Number Af 116 is listed in the inventory catalogue as a musical instrument deriving from Tanzania and related to the Gogo People. The table shows that the rattle became part of the collection in 1934 and names the collector as “Peter”. The short description depicts the item as a “wooden bar/ on each side a globular fruit, filled with berries/ Length: 15,2 cm / calibre: 4 cm”.¹⁷ None of these descriptions gives a colonial context straight away and “Peter” is a very common German first and surname and therefore not especially informative. The inventory card for Af 116 substantiates the rattle as “gifted 1934”¹⁸ but there is no further correspondence on this process preserved. The collector is here indicated as “A. Peter” who can be identified as Gustav Albert Peter (1853–1937), a professor for botany

and director of the botanical garden in Göttingen. His full title is given in the archival material, namely a convolute of handwritten historical object labels and a typed object list “Verzeichnis afrikanischer Sammlungsgegenstände von Herrn Geh. Rat. Prof. Dr. A. Peter”. The indication on the inventory card for the rattles’ place of origin “Northern German East Africa Ugogo (?)”¹⁹ matches the descriptions on the object list from Peter. The language here clarifies the colonial context of the item, but says little on the function, use or other culturally relevant contexts of the object itself. The historical label only says “Rassel für Tanzzwecke aus Ugogo” (“Rattle for danceuses from Ugogo”) but this information was not transferred to the inventory card. Here the description of the object is mainly focusing the outer characteristics:

Rattle: on a wooden bar, two ball-shaped scalloped fruit attached via two plug-wholes. Besides the fruit are provided with many little circularly ordered wholes. The fruit are filled with half red, half black chinaberries.

Peter’s allowance²⁰ shows, that he had given lectures on colonial crops and products on different occasions²¹ and had been planning research and collecting expeditions in order to gain “eigene Anschauung überseeischer Länder, insbesondere auch der Deutschen Schutzgebiete”²² which he describes as necessary in the course of maintaining authenticity as an academic teacher. In 1913 he set off for his first expedition to what was then German East Africa where he collected and travelled until 1919. As he returned to Germany in the aftermath of World War I, there were some incongruities with the transport of his collections and many of the boxes containing collected items and equipment never reached Göttingen. Albert Peter could not overcome the loss of his collections and spend the following years preparing a second expedition. In 1925/26 he travelled to what was then the East Africa Protectorate under British colonial rule in order to regain the materials that had been lost. The reports on both of his quests, published in the magazine *Koloniale Rundschau*, show that Peter moved through different colonial contexts managing to use the German as well as the British infrastructures and local skills and knowledges for his own agenda.²³

Unfortunately, his descriptions don’t reveal much on individual collected items. He does mention that besides his botanical collections there was a range of “Museumsgegenstände” (*museum things*) among the lost goods.²⁴ But as today it is unclear, why there are more than 200 objects in the Ethnographic Collection in Göttingen attributed to Peter, how and when they were

collected and how exactly they became part of the collection. 218 objects from the African continent, 182 from what is today Tanzania, are ascribed to Albert Peter making this the largest Tanzania convolute from one collector.

Af 116 is objectified mainly by mentioning the plant-based materials it is made of – this might be a reference to the collector being a botanist and therefore representing a botanical collection focus. This seemingly neutral way of describing a thing as an object can also be seen as a representation technique in a scientific discourse. As only the outer characteristics are described, only “objective” knowledge is preserved. As an effect the Wagogo rattle becomes classified as an object and, although it is retained in an ethnographic collection, the indigenous cultural knowledge and interpretations are not part of the index system. It is unclear when, by whom and for what reasons the knowledge on the rattle became this fragmented. But the gap is there. The stories missing are not only provenance-stories concerning the rattle’s origin, ownership and its way to Göttingen. There is also a lack of stories on Wagogo interpretations, on music and dance, on social gathering, cultural meaning and connections to the people who made it.

The Wanyakyusa Rattle

The rattle with the Inventory Number Af 228 is listed in the inventory catalogue as a rattle related to the Nyakyusa People in “Konde-Land”, Tanzania. It is subordinated under the category “body hygiene and medicine” and the short description concretises the item as “‘salwe’/ For finding the source of an illness (ancestors/ witchcraft)/ a filled fruit on a long wooden stick”.

Further the table shows that it was collected by “Jansa” and became part of the Collection in Göttingen in 1931.²⁵ The information given on the inventory card, however, gives some more details on the persons related to the rattle naming the collector as “missionary A. F. Jansa” and stating that the Wanyakyusa rattle entered the collection and became object Af 228 in the year 1931 in which it was “gifted by privy council Mirbt”.²⁶

Among the archived materials of the Ethnographic Collection Göttingen is a folder which contains some correspondence between Jansa and Plischke as well as two lists of objects referring to two boxes in which the items were sent to the collection. The heading on the list of the first box shows the sender as “Moravian Mission” and “Kyimbila n. Tukuyu. Tanganyika Territory”. The document is signed by “A F Jansa”. Although Alexander Ferdinand Jansa’s

(1869–1957) vita has not been researched comprehensively yet, it is safe to say that he had been serving the Moravian mission in different stations in East Africa since 1899.²⁷ Carl Mirbt (1860–1929) was a professor for church history at Göttingen University and was connected to protestant mission agencies around the globe.²⁸ In one of the archived letters Jansa states that the collection of ethnographic objects had been initialised by Mirbt but that he had died before witnessing it happen. He also closes the letter mentioning that it would be in the interest of the belated Mirbt that the collection would serve the aims of “heathenmission”²⁹ therefore reminding of the educational function he intended for the objects he had gathered and sent. At the same time there is no further contextualisation of this notion and he left it to Plischkes imagination in what ways the objects would be of service for Christian mission. Most definitely this task was not connected to the persons and the people who had made and used the things from Jansa’s list.

The list for the first box has five categories for the items on it: hammered works, plaited works, things for heathen [or domestic; handwritten addition] use, wood works, diverse items. The second box contains a conglomerate of objects that didn’t fit into the first one or had special customs regulation for transport. The category “things for heathen [or domestic] use” has the most positions representing individual objects or small convolutes and in this part the descriptions are the longest. the Wanyakyusa rattle has position 29 and is recognisable by the handwritten inventory number it has in the collection today. Its description says: “1 clatter (rattle [in engl.]) called ‘salwe’, to learn if an illness or any other mishap was caused by the ancestors or by witchcraft”.³⁰ There is no information on the language the word “salwe” originates from. Flower Manase suggested that it might be Kinyakyusa but the meaning could not yet be translated. The rattle is one of the objects related to witchcraft and healing belonging to the equipment of a healer or some healers. It is yet unknown who this person was, if it was one or more persons from whom these tools were acquired and how this happened. We do not learn in which context and how the rattle would be used. Only the aim to explore the cause of an illness or a mishap is stated, but it is not explained by whom the rattle would be played, if there would be other instruments or equipment or people involved or if it would need a whole ceremony or ritual, a special place to happen or any other cultural contexts in which it is believed that ancestors or witchcraft have the ability to cause calamities and disorder. On the inventory card this description is transferred, only slightly rephrased, without explicitly mentioning that it was given by the collector. Again, this could be explained

with work efficiency reasons as the given information was simply transferred from the list to the inventory card. The effect is that the depiction of a missionary who classified the Wanyakyusa rattle as an object for “heathen” practices is objectified in the index system as it takes some consideration to regain the context of this knowledge on Af 228. Back to the inventory card this description is followed by a specification of the outer characteristics, as the length of the wooden stick, the calibre of the round fruit, that is filled with smaller ligneous fruit and that it is an oncoba fruit. The bibliographic reference to an expedition report by Karl Weule (1864–1926) leads to some remarks on toys called “Kakale”, clatters for male children that would also be part of initiation rites of Wakonde boys. Weule states that the rattling part of the item was made from an oncoba fruit which seems to be the reference to Af 228.³¹

On the backside of the inventory card is another reference for “images of the object”. Following it leads us to Karl Paul Kollmann’s (1865–1925) account on “The Victoria Nyanza. The land, the races and their customs” from 1899 and here to page 207, where some drawn images of musical instruments have been printed. One of the pictures shows two “gourd rattles”, one of them resembling the Wanyakyusa rattle. The description of figure 369 is part of a chapter on Masai culture and places the rattles among other instruments belonging to a healer, here called “medicine man”. This person would use such rattles for “exorcisms” in which they would be accompanied by iron bells producing “tremendous noise”. The text goes on about charms and places these spiritual practice as “common to all [*N**]³² races”.³³ The text from 1899 is embedded in the racist notions of its time and the description remains generalising as there is no specific cultural context given. It was probably chosen as a start for research and comparison to similar rattles used in similar contexts from available publications in the seminar library. Both references do not refer to Wanyakyusa practices but to Masai and Wakonde without explicitly mentioning why or how a comparison would make sense. Both texts were published when Germany claimed colonial territories.

As I have noted above the compilation of the inventory cards in Göttingen in the 1930ies was embedded in the colonial revisionist mentalities in which Plischke himself repeatedly wrote that he saw the future of *Völkerkunde* in future German colonial politics.³⁴ It is therefore also possible that the remark in the text homogenising a form of spiritual practice as a race specific practice was accepted and chosen as a legitimate reference for a further description of the object. However, it remains unclear who decided on the references and why as there is no information on who generated the inventory card, under what

conditions and when exactly. It seems that the information deemed important for the index system, mainly relied on finding relatively comparable objects in publications of fellow (White) scholars and in this case available in the seminar library. Preserving cultural meanings from the perspective of the communities of origin was, either due to a lack of availability or of willingness, not prioritised for this purpose as there is an absence of indigenous stories.

The example of the Wanyakyusa rattle also shows that the categorisation of an object can change and that this change also has impact on the notion of an object. Categorising an object as “for heathen use” and determined to serve Christian mission is a huge difference to “body hygiene and medicine”. The conclusions considering notions of healing practices and spirituality draw from very different assumptions and questions. The categories are not there *qua natura*. They have been decided on, transferred, and reproduced in a process that was influenced by *Zeitgeist* and individual mindsets as well as disciplinary developments.

The Wafipa Rattle

The rattle with the Inventory Number Af 1151 is listed in the inventory catalogue as a rattle, a musical instrument, related to the Fipa People and deriving from today’s Tanzania. It is described as a “perforated calabash/ connected with a wooden stick/ little pellets inside/ length 30,5 cm”. The table shows the “Museum für Völkerkunde Berlin” in the “collector/year” column and the date of entrance into the collection as 1902.³⁵ On the inventory card the object is described as a “round, perforated pumpkin”. Presumably the dissonance was caused by the aim to be more precise in the description in the catalogue. The description of the outer characteristics on the inventory card is vague but there are some hints to the objects colonial background besides the date. The place of origin is given as “Ufipa, D.O.Af”, the latter is short for German East Africa. “Tanzania” as well as the information “Fipa” for the column on the card designated to “tribe” has been supplemented with a typewriter more recently. No other references to Wafipa or cultural contexts of usage for this rattle are given. There is a reference to the old inventory system regarding the denomination of Af 1151 not only as a rattle but as a children’s clapper. This old system is referred to as “alter Zettel”³⁶ on the inventory card. Now, when I selected the Wafipa rattle from the inventory catalogue for the research exchange in 2019, I had not come across that old system yet. In fact,

I had not yet learned about its existence. I mainly considered the object as another rattle for comparison, the items entrance date and the institution of the Museum in Berlin involved in the process.

In 1902 Germany claimed vast colonial territories on the globe, the discipline of *Völkerkunde* was in the making and due to the rapid growth of their collections “Germany’s leading ethnographic museums had descended into chaos”.³⁷ At the same time the academic discipline of *Völkerkunde* had not yet been established at Göttingen university and the ethnographic collection was still in the hands of the zoologist Ernst Ehlers (1835–1925). Still, he did acquire objects. The collection in Göttingen did not “swell like pregnant Hippos”³⁸ as was stated for the bigger museums but, as Plischke stated later, since Germany had become one of the European colonial powers the additions that were made to the collection during this time mainly derived from the German colonies.³⁹ The Royal Ethnographic Museum (*Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde*) in Berlin had a special part in the enmeshment of political colonialism and colonial production of knowledge in Ethnographic museums as it was appointed with a monopoly for ethnographic objects collected in governmentally funded expeditions into the German “*Schutzgebiete*” by law in 1889.⁴⁰

At first glance the documentation seemed to create the Wafipa rattle as a specimen of a rattle from German East Africa or rather of a colonial doublet in the collection in Göttingen. That seemed to be the most important information here. As the archived document titled “chronicle for the years 1868–1930” shows, the Ethnographic Collection received 27 Numbers “Von der Direction des kgl Museum für Völkerkunde aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten” in March 1902.⁴¹ Among these is no rattle listed. Following the hint on the inventory card leads us to the old index card where not only is the rattle specified as a toy. It is also explicitly described as a doublet from the *Schutzgebiete* and as part of the collection “Lt. Bischoff”⁴². Looking back at the archival material Af 1151 can now be identified as the children’s clapper with the old number 1632. Its signature in the museum in Berlin was V II A 1115. In 1901 the fifth catalogue of colonial doublets “*aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten eingegangenen wissenschaftlichen Sendungen*” was published listing items from various collectors and territories from which other German museums could choose. The Wafipa rattle is listed on page 8 as part of the collection from a “Lieutenant Bischoff”.⁴³

Presumably this person was Josef Bischoff (1872–1948), on whom, there is no extensive research yet. However, there are indications that he was part of military colonial violence on a regular basis in what was then German East Africa as well as during the genocide in today’s Namibia.⁴⁴ The connection to

Josef Bischoff arouses special curiosity to the provenance stories of the Wafipa rattle as it remains to be traced in what relation to colonial military practice and colonialism not only as structural but as direct violence the Wafipa rattle was acquired. It does seem logical at this point to assume a connection and I am sure there are more stories to be revealed.

Again, it is unknown how the inventory card was worked on, when and by whom. It is unclear why the information from the old inventory system was not transferred or why the children's clapper became a rattle. Maybe the reasons were very profane work efficiency reasons not to repeat information already given elsewhere, maybe "rattle" was simply seen as the better classification. Maybe giving the reference to the museum in Berlin was viewed as enough information from which the collector and other information could easily be identified if needed. In its in-house documentation, as it was the case for the Wagogo and the Wanyakyusa rattle, indigenous stories and knowledges on cultural contexts as well as references to individuals related to the object's origin are absent.

Conclusion: Objects and their Stories

I have shown that the rattle's stories have become fragmented along the way, the documentation is incomplete, and even looking at seemingly similar items, the ways in which they are represented in the Ethnographic collection are not unified. Therefore, the process of becoming an object is not necessarily possible to resolve. And still, the question of how the Wagogo, the Wanyakyusa and the Wafipa rattle, became represented as objects of the collection has shown that they have been classified and depicted in various ways which reshaped their reality in relation to the people and institutions who brought them to Göttingen. Although all of them are described as rattles at some point, in this process of being collected and documented they became an object mainly characterised by its outer appearance and the materials it is made from (the Wagogo rattle), an instrument for "heathen" practices of a "witchdoctor" later contextualised in the realm of medicine and body hygiene (the Wanyakyusa rattle), and an object characterised mainly by its origin from a German colony (the Wafipa rattle). These notions are deeply rooted in the perspectives, interests, and agendas of the collecting persons. While

it is plausible to assume that the Wagogo and the Wanyakyusa rattle were incorporated in the collection due to the connections Albert Peter and Carl Mirbt had to the University of Göttingen the acquisition of the Wafipa rattle is to be seen in the dynamics of a market of its own – the trade with colonial doublets. The relationship between Josef Bischoff and the Royal Ethnographic Museum in Berlin as well as his collecting practices and their relation to his military position are yet to be investigated.

Following the leads in the documentation of the three rattles shows us more about the collecting than about the objects themselves, the people who made them or the exact circumstances in which they became objects in the Ethnographic collection in Göttingen. But the leads do help us to ask about these gaps and question them in the process of knowledge production.

The amount of information preserved and given on the rattles in the collection is embedded in documenting practices which are difficult, even impossible, to reconstruct. For the in-house materials, besides correspondences that have an addressee and a sender, it is simply not known who exactly created what kind of data when. Therefore, it is speculative why which information was deemed important, and another was not. Nevertheless, as the practices involved in their collection are intertwined with diverse colonial contexts, the stories in the rattles' documentation can also be seen as part of a discourse of colonial knowledge production. Therefore, the missing of indigenous stories on cultural contexts that I have constated for the documentation of all three rattles can be seen in a context of power relations, in which collecting practices have contributed to the construction of distance and difference to the colonised *other*.⁴⁵ In the process of becoming objects the knowledge preserved on the rattles has been objectified following the rules of a scientific discourse. As an effect the connection to their previous existence in their communities of origin becomes ever more difficult to trace and the gaps mute stories that have been assessed irrelevant to being part of the collection as an object.

When the Wagogo, the Wanyakyusa and the Wafipa rattle became part of the research exchange Flower Manase and I found more questions than answers, questions about the categories they are described in today and what could be other categories for them. We constated that in order to gain more balanced stories it would be a start to identify the gaps in the documentation and that it would be necessary to get in contact with the communities that could enrich the rattle's stories with their interpretations and knowledge on past and present cultural contexts as a next step. In the end knowledge needs

people. Being haunted, as Schimming put it in the quotation at the beginning of this paper, is referring to these gaps and the practices of their production. Being haunted by the object's stories also means that they can have impact and meaning in the present. Their plurality can help us to narratives that might "empower and humanize"⁴⁶ and challenge established (colonial) knowledges.



- 1 Adichie, Chimanda Ngozi: "The danger of a single story", July 2009, on: TED Ideas worth spreading, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story, accessed 10 January 2023.
- 2 The conference "Museum Collections in Motion. Colonial and postcolonial encounters" took place at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum in Cologne from July 15–17 2019. Cynthia Schimming presented in the Panel *Open Forum: On the Ethics and Politics of Return and New Forms of Cooperation* on July 16. The Conference Flyer and program can be found online on the website of the University of Cologne, <https://gssc.uni-koeln.de/veranstaltungen/konferenzen/19-7-museum-collections-in-motion>, accessed 10 January 2023.
- 3 Röhrig, Clara and Dominika Vetter: "VOICES FROM THE CONFERENCE 2 – Getting to the core Interviews with Cynthia Schimming and Amber Aranui", 18.8.2019, on: *boasblog DCNtR*, <https://boasblogs.org/de/dcntr/voices-from-the-conference-day-two/>, accessed 10 January 2023.
- 4 Röhrig and Vetter, 2019, *VOICES*.
- 5 Lunden, Staffan (2016): *Displaying Loot. The Benin Objects and the British Museum*, Göteborg, p. 139.
- 6 Stoler, Ann Laura (2002), "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance. On the content in the Form", in: *Archival Science*, Vol. 2, no. 1–2, pp. 87–109.
- 7 During this exchange people from various countries and professions came together in order to share perspectives on colonial provenances in collections and museums. The PAESE-Subprojects in Lower Saxony worked together with experts from Namibia, Tanzania, Cameroon and Papua New Guinea. The experiences were also shared in a workshop at the end of this research exchange. For further information see the projects homepage: <https://www.postcolonial-provenance-research.com/gastbesuche-2019/?lang=en/>, accessed 12 January 2023. In Göttingen we were happy to welcome Tommy Buga from the National Gallery in Port Morsby, PNG, and Flower Manase from the National Museum in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for joint work on objects and their colonial histories.
- 8 On objects from the „Maji Maji war“, 1905–07, see Reyels, Lili; Ivanov, Paola; Weber-Sinn, Kristin (2018) (Eds): *Humboldt Lab Tanzania. Objekte aus den Kolonialkriegen im Ethnologischen Museum, Berlin – Ein tansanisch-deutscher Dialog*, Berlin.
- 9 On the Collections of the Georgia Augusta see: Hoffmann, Dietrich von and Kathrin Maack-Rheinländer (2001) (Eds): *Ganz für das Studium angelegt. Die Museen, Sammlungen und Gärten der Universität Göttingen*: Göttingen or the website of the Centre for Collection Development of Göttingen University, <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/440706.html>, accessed 12 January 2023.
- 10 On the history of the Ethnographic Collection Göttingen see for example: Krüger, Gundolf (2012): "Die Ethnologische Sammlung der Universität Göttingen. Eine Forschungs- und Lehrstätte mit langer Tradition, in: Krüger, Gundolf, Ulrich Menter and Steffen Schrade (Eds): *TABU?! Verborgene Kräfte – Geheimes Wissen*, Hannover, pp. 100–104.
- 11 Braukämper and Kulick-Aldag (2000) and Geisenhainer (2020) have shown this engagement and their works give valuable insights to archival leads and debates on colonial revisionist debates during National Socialism in Germany, especially in Göttingen: Braukämper, Ulrich (2000): "Kolonialethnologie in Göttingen und Witzenhausen", in: Bernhard Streck (Ed.): *Ethnologie und Nationalsozialismus*, Gehen, p. 193–214; Kulick-Aldag, Renate (2000): *Die Göttinger Völkerkunde und der Nationalsozialismus*, Hamburg; Geisenhainer, Katja (2020): „aus innerer Zustimmung zu den Programmpunkten der NSDAP“ – Der Völkerkundler Hans Plischke (1890–1972) und sein Wirken in Göttingen“, in: Schumann, Dirk; Schauz, Désirée (Eds): *Forschen im „Zeitalter der Extreme“: Akademien und andere Forschungseinrichtungen im Nationalsozialismus und nach 1945*, Göttingen, pp. 263–296.
- 12 Nippold, Walter (1937): "Die Ethnographische Sammlung der Universität Göttingen", in: *Museumskunde*, Berlin, Vol. 9, S. 118.
- 13 Nippold, Walter (1957): "Entwicklung der Sammlung seit 1928", in: Plischke, Hans (Ed.): *Göttinger Völkerkundliche Studien*, Düsseldorf, pp. 10–14.

- 14 Scans of the inventory catalogues are also available online on the Homepage of the Ethnographic Collection Göttingen under "Open Access", see <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/617641.html>, accessed 12 January 2023.
- 15 Ethnographic Collection of the Georg August University Göttingen (ECG) Folder 15 "Sammlungsankäufe 1927 bis 1935"; Folder 8 "Ethnographische Sammlung 1868–1930".
- 16 As I have stated in the introduction there is an absence of indigenous stories to be recognised in the documentation of the ethnographic collection. In an attempt to visualise their link to their societies of origin in this text I will refer to the rattles as "the Wagogo rattle", "the Wanyakyusa rattle" and "the Wafipa rattle".
- 17 Fuchs, Peter und Gundolf Krüger (1993) (Eds): *Verzeichnis der Völkerkundlichen Sammlung des Instituts für Völkerkunde der Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen. Teil IV. Afrika*. Von Wolfram Heise, Antje Spliethoff-Laiser und Sybille Wolkenhauer. Göttingen, p. 223 [translation of the author].
- 18 ECG, Inventory card Af 116.
- 19 The reason for the question mark is as unclear as the identity of the person who wrote it. Peter's list clearly states the related place for the Wagogo rattle as Ugogo which probably induced the deduction to the Wagogo in the category "tribe" on the inventory card.
- 20 This partial estate of Albert Peter is kept in the department of manuscripts, scholarly and literary papers at Göttingen State and University Library. A directory can be found on the website of the department: Teilnachlass Peter, Albert, Professor für Botanik, 1853–1937, Cod. Ms. A. Peter 1–23, <http://hans.sub.uni-goettingen.de/nachlaesse/Peter.pdf>, accessed 12 January 2023. When referring to documents of the allowance I will use the signatures provided in this document.
- 21 See partial estate A. Peter, COD. MS. A. PETER 41, COD. MS. A. PETER 52, COD. MS. A. PETER 97, Cod. Ms. A. Peter 94.
- 22 See Cod. Ms. A. Peter 89: 1, a Memorandum for a botanic voyage around the world dating 1907.
- 23 Peter, Albert (1927): "Zwei Expeditionen nach Deutsch-Ostafrika 1913/19 und 1925/26. Die I. Expedition", in: *Koloniale Rundschau. Zeitschrift für koloniale Wirtschaft, Völker- und Länderkunde*, Vol. 2, p. 33–42. and Peter, Albert (1927): "Zwei Expeditionen nach Deutsch-Ostafrika 1913/19 und 1925/26. Die II. Expedition", in: *Koloniale Rundschau. Zeitschrift für koloniale Wirtschaft, Völker- und Länderkunde*, Vol. 2, pp. 65–75.
- 24 Peter, 1927, *Expedition I*, p. 42
- 25 See Fuchs and Krüger, 1993, *Verzeichnis*, p. 256 [translation of the author].
- 26 ECG, Inventory card Af 228.
- 27 In his work on protestant missionaries in colonial Africa Thorsten Altena mentions A.F. Jansa in various references. Especially interesting is the hint to the archives of the Moravian Mission in which a Memorandum: "Erinnerungen des Missionars Alexander Ferdinand Jansa," (1868–1957) is preserved. See: Altena, Thorsten (2003): *Ein Häuflein Christen mitten in der Heidenwelt des dunklen Erdteils". Zum Selbst- und Fremdverständnis protestantischer Missionare im kolonialen Afrika 1884–1918*, Münster, p. 254.
- 28 The website www.goettingenkolonial.uni-goettingen.de put together by students of Prof. Dr. Rebekka Habermas as a result of a Seminar "Universität und Kolonialismus" in summer 2019 mentions Carl Mirbt in several entries, last accessed 12 January 2023. A comprehensive study on his networks and collecting practices concerning ethnographic objects has not yet been created.
- 29 ECG, Folder 15 "Sammlungsankäufe 1927 bis 1935".
- 30 The original is in German: "No 29 1Klapper(rattle) genannt "salwe", um zu erfahren, ob irgend eine Krankheit, oder ein Miszgeschick von den Ahnen, oder von Zauberei herrühren.", ECG, Folder 15 "Sammlungsankäufe 1927 bis 1935".
- 31 Weule, Karl (1908): *Wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse meiner ethnographischen Forschungsreise in den Südosten Deutsch-Ostafrikas*, Berlin, p. 93.

- 32 As the N-word is especially hurtful for people living in the present I decided not to reproduce its trauma by spelling it out. It is not a neutral word but a concept bearing personal and structural racist impacts. Marking it in the citation with an * is enough to show the historically used language in this context. On the problematic of the N-word in German language see e.g. Kilomba, Grada (2009): "Das N-Wort", on: bpb, *Afrikanische Diaspora in Deutschland*, <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/afrikanische-diaspora/59448/das-n-wort?p=0>, accessed 12 January 2023.
- 33 Kolmann, Karl Paul (1899): *The Victoria Nyanza. The land, the races and their customs with specimens of some of the dialects*, London, p. 207
- 34 Here in: Plischke, Hans (1939): "Zum Geleit", in: *Göttinger Völkerkundliche Studien*, ed. by Hans Plischke, Göttingen, p. 10.
- 35 Fuchs and Krüger, 1993, *Verzeichnis*, p. 224.
- 36 ECG, Inventory card Af 1151
- 37 Penny, H. Glenn (2002): *Objects of Culture. Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, London, p. 1.
- 38 Transl. From: Frobenius, Leo (1925): *Vom Schreibtisch zum Äquator. Planmäßige Durchwanderung Afrikas*, Frankfurt a.M., p. 19.
- 39 Plischke, Hans (1931): *Die Ethnographische Sammlung der Universität Göttingen, ihre Geschichte und Bedeutung*, Göttingen, p. 42.
- 40 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (2021): "Die koloniale(n) Debatte(n) und das museale Selbstverständnis. Ein Positionspapier des Ethnologischen Museums. Kolonialismus und das Ethnologische Museum Berlin", on: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, <https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/ethnologisches-museum/sammeln-forschen/kolonialismus/>, accessed 20 January 2023; see also Lustig, Wolfgang (1988): „Außer ein paar zerbrochenen Pfeilen nichts zu verteilen...“ – Ethnographische Sammlungen aus den deutschen Kolonien und ihre Verteilung an Museen 1889–1914, in: *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*, Vol. 18, pp. 157–178; Schindlbeck, Markus (2012): *Gefunden und verloren: Arthur Speyer, die dreißiger Jahre und die Verluste der Sammlung Südsee des Ethnologischen Museums Berlin*, Berlin; Hoffmann, Beatrix (2012): *Das Museumsobjekt als Tausch- und Handelsgegenstand. Zum Bedeutungswandel musealer Objekte im Kontext der Veräußerungen aus dem Sammlungsbestand des Völkerkundemuseums Berlin*, Berlin; Lang, Sabine/Nicklisch, Andrea (2021): *Den Sammlern auf der Spur: Provenienzforschung zu kolonialen Kontexten am Roemer- und Pelizaeus- Museum Hildesheim 2017/18*, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, <https://doi.org/10.11588/arthistoricum.742>
- 41 "Chronicle for the years 1868–1930" in ECG, Folder 8 "Ethnographische Sammlung 1868–1930".
- 42 ECG Af 1151_ZR_1632.
- 43 Luschan, Felix (1901): *Fünftes Verzeichnis der abgabaren Doubletten der aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten eingegangenen wissenschaftlichen Sendungen*. Berlin (SMB-PK, EM, „Acta betreffend Kolonial-Doubletten“, Vol. 2, Pars I B. 47), p. 8.
- 44 Bühner, Tanja (2011): *Die Kaiserliche Schutztruppe für Deutsch-Ostafrika. Koloniale Sicherheitspolitik und transkulturelle Kriegführung 1885 bis 1918*, München, p. 211.
- 45 Weber, Kristin (2006): "Objekte als Spiegel kolonialer Beziehungen. Das Sammeln von Ethnographica zur Zeit der deutschen kolonialen Expansion in Ostafrika (1884–1914)", in: *Beiträge zur 1. Kölner Afrikawissenschaftlichen Nachwuchstagung (KANT I)*, ed. by Seifert, Marc, Markus Egert, Fabian Heerbaart, Kathrin Kolossa, Mareike Limanski, Meikal Mumin, Peter André Rodekuhr, Susanne Rous, Sylvia Stankowski and Marilena Thanassoula, Köln, p. 3.
- 46 Adichie, 2009, *Single Story*.