

# STUDIEN ZUR MATERIELLEN KULTUR

**Glenn Arthur Ricci**

**Colonial Germany and the Hidden  
Cultural History of Germany in the  
Ethnographic Collection of the Landes-  
museum für Natur und Mensch.  
An Examination of the Weapons  
Collection, the Collectors and the  
Exhibition of Foreign Cultures in the  
Museum**

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Colonial Germany and the Hidden Cultural History of Germany in the Ethnographic Collection of the Landesmuseum für Natur und Mensch. An Examination of the Weapons Collection, the Collectors and the Exhibition of Foreign Cultures in the Museum

## **Impressum**

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## Inhalt

1. Introduction	8
2. Database & Observations	9
3. State of the Art	15
4. Theories and Methods	coming soon
5. Hidden German Culture within the Ethnology Museum	coming soon
6. Placing the non-European in Context	coming soon
7. The Influence of Popular Literature	coming soon
8. Ethnographic Objects after 1919	coming soon
9. Further Observations	coming soon

## 1. Introduction

Despite the loss of Germany's colonies having occurred nearly a century ago, there is relatively little research in terms of the provenance of the ethnographic objects collected from the colonies during the short 35 year period (see Penny 2002, p.1). Symposiums and discussions of how to deal with colonial artifacts within museums have become an increasingly popular topic within the past years (e.g., Förster 2017; Gorgis 2017), however, relatively little information was widely published on the ethnographic collections themselves when I began my research on the ethnographic collection in the Landesmuseum für Natur und Mensch Oldenburg (LMNM) in 2013. Since then ethnographic provenance research has become a much-discussed topic, e.g., in Berlin due to the development of the Humboldt Forum. In 2017 art historian Bénédicte Savoy resigned from the Expert Advisory Board over a dispute regarding the amount of provenance research that was being carried out on the ethnographic objects insisting that it was not enough. Ethnologist Anna Schmid regards the provenance research of ethnographic objects as different from the provenance research done for looted art during the National Socialist period maintaining that it was more difficult with colonial histories that often protract the research (Gorgis 2017). As a result, except for the repatriation of human remains to former German colonies and non-colonies, there are virtually no published pieces of provenance research of colonial objects, especially ones that explicitly discuss methodology. Only as recently as May 2018 has a Code of Conduct been presented by the German Association of Museums regarding the handling and provenance of colonial objects (Deutscher Museumskunde 2018). Needless to say, when I began my research with the LMNM in 2013 there were no established guidelines.

Through funding from the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (KSB) and the Fellow Me! program, I was invited as an international research fellow to examine

the collection of the LMNM. Through an agreement between the KSB and the LMNM, the museum was to create an exhibition using objects from the museum's ethnological collection. When I arrived at the museum to begin my examination of the collection, there was an incomplete digital catalog and an estimate of 5,000 to 7,000 objects. Compounding my early difficulties in examining the collection was the fact that there were at times (more often than not) items lacking a Standortziffer number and the storeroom itself was in a state of disarray. On a regular workday in the warehouse I would encounter bundles of spears and arrows bound together; arrows and daggers dangling from pegs on the walls; shields overlapping each other on a chainlink fence hanging on the back wall; large statues, more spears, and drums crowding or laying in the already narrow walkways between the shelves that were piled with boxes or loose objects; and no space to examine the objects or photograph them.

Furthermore, the ethnographic objects were not all located in the same storeroom. It would only be later during my research that I encountered human remains stored in a small room behind the museum's aquarium! Finally, the digital database itself was something of a relic, being software that was not released this century. Such was the state of the ethnographic collection from which I was to develop an exhibition. I first began cleaning up the digital database and establishing basic provenance for many of the objects.

After six months of intensively working with the collection and creating a workable database, I could finally get an overview of the collection. While the museum had initially hoped to produce an exhibition theme regarding the changes of objects over time, I had to inform them that this was not possible due to the nature of the collection. To summarize the collection, there were between 6,000 and 7,000 objects (the actual total depends on how one counts groups of objects such as coins or bones). These objects come from

around the world such as Peru and Central America; Papua New Guinea and Japan; Tanzania and Namibia; Australia and the Northwest coast of North America. Furthermore, the period of the collection ranges from 500 BC to the 20th century. Rather than focusing on a single culture or period, I decided to concentrate my exhibition ideas on unifying the collection. I began by examining features that anthropologist Donald E. Brown refers to as human universals, which are features of culture found among all people known in ethnography and history (Brown 2004). Some examples of human universals are cooking, myths, or dance.

The exhibition I developed from this research, "Familiar and Foreign in Belief Systems," used cross-cultural comparisons to examine what cultures shared and how they differed in specific human universals. Furthermore, incorporated into certain human universals such as birth, eating, and death, were supernatural belief systems. For example, every culture in the collection had a belief system that factored into their creation mythology, rites of passage for youths, death rituals, or special restrictions for food. These aspects could lend themselves to being explored by examining the objects used for these universals, thereby, allowing the exhibition of, for example, Maasai milk pails from Africa alongside a Chilkat dance blanket from the Northwest Coast of North America since both played a significant role in ritual feasts.

Before this exhibition had opened and before I had even had a year to work with the collection, the KSB created a competition for a second exhibition. Since I had been developing a useful database for the collection, I began looking at general information that would bring all the objects together. While the first exhibition used the fact that every culture that I had encountered in the collection had a supernatural belief system, the other common thread that brought the objects together was more straightforward. All of the objects had wound up in the LMNM warehouse. Going one step further, collectors had brought all of the objects to the museum. In other words, the

objects were all chosen by a collector. The choices made by the collector were influenced by the culture of the time, just as our daily lives and choices are influenced by our surroundings.

This simple observation I made in 2013 started off my examination of ethnographic objects as a reflection of the German culture as a framework of the collection. Why were they collected? Who was doing the collecting? How was the collecting being carried out? The exhibition concept I developed for the KSB competition was successful leading to the creation of "Wild Savage, Peaceful Savage: How a Museum Creates an Image of the Other." The following chapters will explore the methodology, theories, and my findings, while examining the ethnographic collection of the LMNM from 2013-2015.

## 2. Database & Observations

The LMNM database contained 5,821 digital pages (one page per object), although the reality of the situation was that a significant number of these digital pages were either blank; doubles of other objects; listing no inventory number; listing only an inventory number and no description; or were references to pictures from books with no additional information. I set out to first establish a database for objects with inventory numbers and stated the years they were donated, after which I followed up basic provenance research and re-discovering objects that had been misplaced or miscataloged in the database. By the time the KSB asked for a second exhibition idea, I had compiled a relatively complete database of 4,550 objects.

	Pre-Colonial	Colonial	Non-Colonial	Post-Colonial	Total	No Relationship
<b>Weapon</b>	102	1060	51	70	1283	28,20 %
<b>Non-Weapon</b>	143	974	86	2064	3267	71,80 %
<b>Total</b>	245	2034	137	2134	4550	100 %

*Table 1: LMNM observed frequencies*

In November 2013, a pattern in the ethnographic collection was found. Before 1884, the museum received only 245 objects; between 1884 and 1919 (35 years), 2,171 objects flooded the museum; while from 1920 to 2013 (93 years) 2,134 objects were received. In other words, during the 35 years when Germany had colonies, the LMNM received on average 62 objects per year, whereas, from 1920 (after Germany officially lost the colonies) to 2013 the museum received on average less than 23 objects per year for nearly a century. This noticeable increase of objects into the museum between 1884 and 1919 was due to the acquisition of colonies by Germany in 1884 and the official loss of the colonies in 1919. Interestingly, these initial findings show that 47.71% of

the museum's ethnological collection comes from this 35-year colonial period (Table 1). The active collecting of objects during this period is typical for most museums of Germany at this time. For Germany, which had only unified in 1871, there was a supposed need for the relatively new nation to assert itself as a world power amongst other European countries. At this stage in history other nations, such as the United Kingdom, already had a much longer colonial past and a vast colonial empire. And yet despite Germany's late entry as a colonial power, the accelerated collecting during these 35 years far surpassed those of the British. A mere 14 years after gaining colonies, the ethnographic collection of the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin was estimated to be seven times larger than that of the British Museum (Penny 2002, p.1). This frenzied collecting practice is evident in the LMNM collection. Through such historical and cultural observations, it is clear that collecting patterns can be better understood. There were more patterns in the collection that could not so easily be explained.

10

	Colonial	Non-Colonial	Total
<b>Weapon</b>	1060	51	1111
<b>Non-Weapon</b>	974	86	1060
<b>Total</b>	2034	137	2171

*Table 2: Weapon and non-weapon collecting by location*

Upon further examination, I found that during the brief colonial period more than half (52.11%) of the objects collected from the German colonies were weapons, whereas objects collected from non-colonies consisted of mainly (62.77%) non-weapons (Table 2). For the collection as a whole 94.5% of the weapons are from the colonial period while from 1920 to 2013 the museum collected 70 weapons making up only 3.28% of objects for the post-colonial period. In total, only 46.9% of the objects entered the museum between 1920



to 2013. In the pre-colonial period (before 1884, when all ethnographic items were technically from non-German territories), weapons made up only 41.6% of the goods collected, while between 1884-1919 weapons collected from colonies made up 52.11% versus only 37.22% from non-colonies from the same period. These observations in collecting patterns were unexpected, given that the colonial experience of Germany was short and that their colonies were small. The surge in collecting during the colonial period is something that is expected when understood in combination with German history and nationalism of the time. The emphasis on weapons from the colonies and the lack of weapons from non-colonial territories is a pattern that also might be better understood through a historical and cultural analysis.

To compare these observations with other museums, museum guides from the relevant period were consulted, but first it must be kept in mind that due to the numerous ethnographic objects collected at the time, it was impossible for the museum to display everything to the public. Therefore, the curator or museum director would need to choose the objects from the collection that they felt best reflected a culture for display. This presents a second set of influences by German culture regarding the ethnological collection. Just as the choices made by the collectors were biased (influenced by their culture), so too were the choices by the curator bias and influenced by external factors (e.g., German politics or public demands). The curator therefore makes a choice based on an already biased collection for display to the public. Nevertheless, the overall intention of the first ethnographic museum was to be scientific, objective and factual. In other words, the choices made by the curators were, in their minds, the best ones to reflect the distant cultures that created them. Of course, such a 'real' presentation of another culture is impossible, especially when one is working in a museum with objects collected subjectively.

Due to the nature of the early ethnology museums, there were few labels or descriptions concerning the contents of vitrines, and so the average visitor would have needed to rely upon museum guides for information regarding the objects and the cultures that created them. These museum guides offered a glimpse into what the visitor might have seen and a clear indication of how the museum viewed these other cultures. The museum guide was the authoritative role in narrating the use of the objects to the visitor, and what characterized the culture from which they were taken. The specific wording of the vitrines and cultural descriptions are discussed later. What is essential at this point is the observable number of weapons or the violence mentioned per vitrine or per culture in early ethnology museums. Such historical observations of the number of weapons compared to non-weapons from other museums allows for a comparison to the LMNM collection to see if there is a similar pattern in collecting.

	Cultures Displayed	Mention of Weapons	%
North American	40	3	7,5 %
Africa	89	46	51,7 %

*Table 3: Königliche Museen zu Berlin 1898*

The Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin (Königliche Museen zu Berlin) 1898 museum guide (Table 3) lists 40 separate vitrines for North America. North America was selected as a foreign location to compare non-colony objects. For the region of Africa, where Germany had the most colonial land, there are 89 vitrines described. The following analysis assumes that there is a correlation between the descriptions in the museum guide and what was displayed in the vitrines at the time, although the exact objects and their display with the vitrines are unknown.

Before looking at the descriptions of the vitrines in the guide, assumptions can be made regarding the objects on display. If the curator were presenting an objective view of the objects obtained by the collectors, one would expect a proportional representation equal to the collection. For example, for the LMNM and its collection, approximately one-third of the objects displayed for the cultures not associated with German colonies (e.g., North America) should be weapons and just over half of the artifacts from the colonial cultures (e.g., Africa) should be weapons. Such an exact proportional representation of the collection would seem unlikely.

In the Royal Museum of Ethnology 1898 museum guide, of the 40 vitrines featuring North American cultures, only three, or 7.5%, feature weapons, while descriptions of weapons from Africa are present for 46 out of 89 vitrines (a collecting pattern similar to the LMNM). There are far fewer remarks of weapons for the cultures of North America compared to the LMNM (one-third from non-colonies), suggesting that either this was not a proportional display of the collection or the museum received far fewer weapon related objects from North American cultures than the LMNM.

Another comparison was made with the Rautenstrauch-Jöst-Museum in Cologne from 1908 (Table 4). In the museum guide, there are groups of vitrines featuring at times more than one culture. For the Americas (North, Central, and South America) there are sixteen groups of vitrines mentioned covering fifteen different cultures. Overall, the vitrines of the Americas feature only three records of weapons for sixteen vitrine groups, while the three vitrines groups that discussed the weapons examined four cultures (three from South America and one from North America). Since four of the fifteen (26.67%) American cultures descriptions are concerning weapons, it may be that this means that at least four of the sixteen vitrines feature weaponry. If this were true, then the museum's representation would be closer to the collecting pattern of the LMNM (one-third weapons from the non-colonies).

However, the number of actual vitrine groups (16) featuring weapons is only three (18.75%) meaning that the actual display of weapons is less than what was described in the guide. For Africa and the colonial territories, there are a total of 24 groups of vitrines mentioned highlighting 21 cultures. Of the vitrine groups 19 of 24 mention weapons (79.17%) while 19 of 21 cultures (90.48%) contain descriptions in terms of weapons or violence. This representation also differs significantly from the expected patterns from the LMNM ethnological collecting patterns.

	Schrankfeld Groups	with Weapons	without Weapons	Total	Cultures Displayed	Cultures Displayed with Weapons		
Africa	24	19	79,17 %	4	23	21	19	90,48 %
Americas	16	3	13,64 %	13	16	15	4	26,67 %

Table 4: Rautenstrauch-Jöst-Museum 1908

While there may be objections to the exhibition patterns of the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin and Rautenstrauch-Jöst-Museum, remember that these museums are supposed to be representing and describing the same cultures. In other words, the representations of cultures should not differ so significantly from one museum to the other, if what they are presenting is an objective representation of the culture. For example, the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin and Rautenstrauch-Jöst-Museum would both have equal representation of African cultures in terms of the number of weapons being displayed rather than Berlin featuring roughly half while Cologne features nearly 80%. What these observations suggest is that each museum was subjective in its representation of their ethnological collections.

	Native American (Non-Colony)	African (Colony)	Total
Weapon	1	21	22
Non-Weapon	23	35	58
Total	24	56	80

*Table 5: Naturalien-Cabinet Presentation 1870-1910, observed frequencies*

At the time of this research, the LMNM did not have a historical museum guide available to offer an insight into its exhibition patterns. The museum does present, in its permanent exhibition space, a recreated display in the form of a Naturalien-Cabinett from between 1870 and 1910 (Table 5). This display is not a one-to-one recreation of a public exhibition display, but rather a representation of how an exhibition appeared during this period.

Upon entering the exhibition space, the visitor encounters rows of vitrines on the right side and a tall glass vitrine featuring exotic wildlife on the left. Immediately on the right-hand side, the visitor finds a small section devoted to the ethnological collection. Facing the aisle, on the left-hand side is a tall vitrine with 3/5 of it dedicated to objects from North America, specifically the Northwest Coast of North America. At eye level the North American section of the vitrine features masks, including the Tlingit Mask which has commonly been featured in advertisements for the museum, making it the 'jewel' of the collection. At the end of the vitrine, in the final 2/5 of it are wood milk containers and miscellaneous items such as tobacco containers and shell ornaments. The wall opposite of the vitrine, on the right-hand side, as the visitor enters the aisle, is a wall devoted to African shields and spears and a smaller vitrine table vitrine filled with bows and arrows with some iron band jewelry mixed in.

In numbers, the visitor is offered 24 objects from North America to view, of which only one item is a weapon, and 56 objects from colonial Africa of which 21 are weapons. In general this is a proportional amount, given the collecting patterns found in the collection (between 1870 and 1910, 50.98% of the collection was made up of weapons). However, one needs to take into account how the African objects are displayed. As stated, the vitrine on the left-hand side provides only 2/5 of the space for the African goods. Opposite of this vitrine, the other half of the ethnographic exhibition space is devoted to African weapons. In terms of display space, 71.42% of the space available for Africa displays weapons while only 28.57% of the area is for non-weapons. As for the North American collection, only 4.16% of the objects are weapons.

There are two major points to take away from the observations of the LMNM collecting and Naturalien-Cabinett methods. The first is that the collection is not realistically represented, that is to say the number of objects are not reflective of the objects from the cultures in the collection. In the LMNM display, there is a disproportionate display of objects representing the North American and African cultures. To the visitor, the presence of objects within a museum is a testament to their importance and it is based solely on this representation. Based on this, the visitor might assume the LMNM has a significant number of Native American objects in its collection (it does not) and that weapons were a dominant part of the material culture for Africa (they were not and their cultural function was more complicated). The second point is that despite the exhibition space being designed by modern scholars, the objects displayed are still not representative of the collection, but rather curatorial biases. The second point is a continuation of the first and unique to this display, which is that this modern display demonstrates that the German cultural influences on display techniques are not readily recognized.

To clarify, the LMNM example display was not based on any actual exhibition, as mentioned before, but as a simulation of the historical display

techniques from 1870 to 1910. Therefore, items from LMNM's collection were chosen by 21st century designers. Given the overwhelming number of African objects in the collection from 1870 to 1910, these objects would seem to be an obvious choice for presentation. The choice of the North American objects, specifically from the Northwest Coast, however, seems misplaced given there are only around 127 objects collected by Kuprianov (listed in the database as of 2013) that entered the museum's collection before 1910. In the 2013 database, there were 2,362 objects listed as having been donated to the museum by 1910. This means that the Northwest Coast collection made up only 5% of the collection whereas Oceania cultures made up 26.19% of the collection by 1910. The choice for Native American objects over other more prominent cultures in the collection is part of a German cultural fascination with the Native Americans. The fascination with the indigenous cultures of North America and the value placed upon their material culture has a long history in Germany and will be discussed more in a later chapter since this influence is also found historically (e.g., the Royal Museum of Ethnology in Berlin and Rautenstrauch-Jöst-Museum both displaying the Native American with virtually no weapons).

Based on these observations from the LMNM's collection and the representations in historical ethnological museums, it appears that from the moment an object was collected (or chosen from the collection for display), an idea of the foreign culture was already present in the collector or curator's mind. In other words, the collector did not go to a foreign culture with no preconceived idea of what the foreign culture is, while the curator 'knows' how to represent the culture to the public. For example, the predetermination of cultures of German East Africa as *Naturvölker* meant that any objects relating to civilization that were adapted after hundreds of years of contact with Arab traders were not collected since these objects did not fit the *Naturvölker* classification. Furthermore, the constant conflict between the Ger-

man protectorate and the locals of the African colonies would have been well known. This would further created the idea in the mind of the collector of a savage African culture in the territories. Such influences would determine what was collected and curated.

Not all influences were the same for each culture. On the other hand, in popular German literature, the Native American is seen as being nobler and at one with nature when compared to African cultures. In addition to this, the German people never had any conflict with the Native Americans allowing popular literature and the romantic ideas of the culture to dominate the mind of the collector. As a result, the objects that best represent their idea of what the collector thinks the culture is like are collected. Alternatively, collectors may also collect objects that are in popular demand, either by the public or by the museums. In such cases, highly sought after objects are given priority over others. After the collector brings the objects to the museum, it is up to the curator to choose what can be displayed. Like the collector, the curator also has preconceived ideas of the foreign culture. These same influences, coupled with additional external forces (such as providing entertainment to the public) also affected which objects from the collection should be displayed. For example, to fulfill the idea of a peaceful savage of the Great Plains, weapons would be less represented in displays.

What the LMNM *Naturalien-Cabinet* demonstrates is that this phenomenon is present today. This bias collecting and displaying is an area of research that requires further exploration and consideration to understand the ethnological collections gathered in turn-of-the-century Germany and perhaps more importantly how to deal with these collections in the 21st century so that curators are not merely presenting preconceived cultures. Without acknowledging in displays the fallibility and biases of the historical collectors and curators, modern museums risk the perpetuation of preconceived notions of other cultures. The following work is an example of research carri-

ed out in the LMNM from 2013-2015 to better understand the collectors and collection as a test case for future researchers to develop more meaningful exhibitions from colonial era collections.

### 3. State of the Art

At the time of my initial research there had been a growing interest in the ethnographic collections in Germany for the preceding decades although there seemed to be little agreement with how the collections should be handled, let alone researched. In 1990, Volker Harms published the article *The Aims of the Museum for Ethnology: Debate in the German-speaking Countries*. The article covers the position of the ethnological museums of Germany since the end of World War II and the discussions surrounding the direction that the museums should be taking. While he acknowledges that “museums for ethnology, founded and immensely expanded during the period of colonial imperialism, would need to change radically and that this would require not only new types of displays...but new educational aims” (p.460), nowhere are the ideas of postcolonial theory put forth, with the exception of those by Herbert Ganslmayr, former director of the Übersee-Museum Bremen. In 1980 he proposed that the people from the former colonies should have a voice in these new museums, although how these voices would or could help the exhibition of historical ethnographic objects or colonial history was not suggested (p.460-461). Instead this approach seemed to favor contemporary cultures from former colonies the design of future exhibitions rather than addressing colonial collections of the museum or acknowledging that these cultures have changed since the objects were collected.

It also seems that only recently has postcolonial theory and research emerged as a multi-disciplinary field looking not just at the modern museum, but at the impact colonialism has had on all academic fields. Despite being an important framework for fields such as ethnology and history, there is relatively little agreement among international researchers as to what is meant by postcolonialism. While the name itself implies a period after colonialism, the time period for which this is meant differs from country to country, while

other researchers have viewed postcolonialism as more of an active anti-colonialism movement within academia (e.g. Césaire, Senghor, & Fanon (Zhao-guo 2011). Each country seems to approach postcolonial thought in a nationalist way with a special focus on a specific country; however this nationalist view of colonialism generally ignores that each country was part of a larger cultural formation for centuries before colonialism had even begun to boom in the 19th century (Steinmetz 2006, p.3). For my research with the LMNM collection and for Germany in general, postcolonialism is not used as a description of time after 1919 in Germany. Making use of it as a concept would limit the geographical range and time period of analysis. Instead postcolonialism is used as a way of providing a voice or point of view for those that were largely silenced or ignored in the written historical records before, during and after Germany's colonial period. Not restricting postcolonialism to a specific time period and nation is important for those cultures of former German colonies given that they continued being colonies following World War I and gained independence at varying times. Furthermore, the colonies were ruled by different nations with the British and other powers dividing them up, providing each territory with unique experiences and histories following 1919. As for the ethnographic objects in my postcolonial research, they are given more meaning than becomes apparent in the collector's or the Western scientist' descriptions and categorizations of the objects. Historically, these would have been produced has been in the same vein as was usual in the natural sciences in Germany. However, these ethnographic objects in Western museums are being constantly re-invented by the context in which the object is placed; the most obvious change of context would have been the removal of the object from the colonial territories and being placed in the center of Western cities (Barringer 2008, p.11). This radical contextual change did not attract any attention during the time when the objects were first collected. But it is now an important part of the postcolonial research of the object. This

examination necessarily leads to an examination of the provenance of the ethnographic objects, in contrast to examining the objects strictly with the goal of learning the provenance of the object.

This postcolonial framework borrows from Edward Saïd's description of the us-and-them binary constructs he identifies in his work *Orientalism*. In his work, he describes how the Western views categorized the Orient based on 19th century knowledge and clichés, which in turn affected the practice of colonialism and imperialism. Saïd put forth that Western views were privileged and in an advantageous position to define the Orient, which was viewed as/made passive and at a disadvantage in that respect. In his postcolonial study, Saïd goes so far as to acknowledge the role of German Orientalist contributions, but does not go on further to examine them (Steinmetz 2006, p.4). This line of thought can be applied to the ethnographic museums of Germany as well, both in the past and in the present. The us-and-them binary was explored in the exhibition *Böser Wilder, friedlicher Wilder: Wie Museen das Bild anderer Kulturen prägen* I have created in the LMNM. It examined the historic role of the museum creating a fictitious image of people from the colonies as well as how these fabrications can still be found in modern presentations of the historical ethnographic objects. Other researchers have examined this us-and-them binary of the ethnology museum from different points of view.

In 2002, H. Glenn Penny published his work *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* that covers the history of the founding of the ethnographic museum in Germany and its role in the public sphere. His research examines closely the interaction of the directors of the museums with other scientists and the public, thereby developing on what such influential museum directors of the time believed they were accomplishing (or trying to) with the ethnographic museum. The third chapter of this work is titled *The Cultures of Collecting and the Politics of Science* (pp.95-130) and begins to touch upon the culture of the collector, but instead

focuses mainly on the culture of collecting that the museum directors, not the collectors in the field, had created and the politics behind their science. This research offers valuable insight into the major actions that museum directors were making when dealing with politics, ethnologists and dealers, yet curiously enough there is virtually no mention of the collecting practices of non-ethnologists in this chapter (save for those who maintained false credentials). Also lacking in this detailed research are the presentation methods for the various cultures that were displayed in the museums as well as details into what was specifically collected in which colonies. These are topics that my research with the LMNM has begun to address by examining the collectors themselves who were not ethnologists yet still made considerable contributions to the ethnographic collections in Berlin, Oldenburg and elsewhere. Looking at what has been collected and dealing with why these objects may have been collected in the first place may provide a better understanding of how and why they were exhibited in the manner that they were.

Research looking specifically at African ethnographic collections from 1841 to 1945 has been carried out at the Übersee-Museum Bremen (ÜMB), which like the LMNM and museums across Germany, has received a significant number of ethnographic objects during the colonial period. The research carried out by Bettina von Briskorn in *Zur Sammlungsgeschichte afrikanischer Ethnographica im Übersee-Museum Bremen 1841-1945* (2000) looks at some of the history of the collection for the museum and carries out some analysis of who was doing the collecting. She found that the largest collecting source (after unknown donators) for the Übersee-Museum Bremen from Africa between 1841 and 1945 was the military. Similar to the LMNM, following the first World War the ÜMB saw a significant drop in objects being brought to the museum. While this information is useful and makes Penny's lack of attention to the role of the military collecting practices more curious, Briskorn does not delve deeper into the issue of why this may have been the case other

than this may have been due to items being appropriated by force or collected as trophies (pp.161-162). Furthermore, Briskorn's examination of the collection refrains from commenting on the display practices of the museum during the changing cultural periods of Germany during this time although she does discuss the mimetic exhibition styles, or dioramas, that sought to reproduce scenes of everyday life in Africa. An examination of the changes in the display styles would be particularly interesting considered the changes in government that occurred between 1841 and 1945. Historical archaeological work carried out in Berlin from 2008-2009 has demonstrated how subtle changes in architecture seems to reflect the government's influence, ideologies and history over time (Ricci 2011) and it is possible that changes within the museum may reflect shifts in motivations.

Briskorn notes that the diorama style of presentation created a contrast to those of Berlin at the time and that they were more in line with what was popular with the public. She stays vague on explaining why this may have been the case. This relationship between the public sphere and the museum is a theme which my research at the LMNM has examined more deeply. Briskorn's work also provides a series of statistical tables including whether or not objects were purchased or gifts, the donator, serial numbers for the objects, and more. Despite the detailed statistics provided, there is little in way of analytical interpretation. Nevertheless, the research provides a solid basis for comparative studies between the collecting practices of the ÜMB and the LMNM, so that patterns and hypotheses regarding broader collecting and displaying practices can be tested.

Postcolonial studies in other fields have also begun to examine the role colonialism had in shaping Germany in the early 20th century. Whereas modern museums for ethnology and ethnologists are developing practices and discussing how to handle the material culture from this period, historians have been able to more easily examine the history of the colonies and their

link to later German history. David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen's *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (2010) examines the build up of colonial concepts and practices that had an influence on the rise and development of National Socialism in the early 20th century. The authors not only examine historical events and dates, but make a connection between German culture's fascination with the exotic non-Europeans and the ethnology museums during this time. In chapter 6 *A Piece of Natural Savagery* (pp.85-103) the role of the *Völkerschauen* and the ethnological museum are discussed with an emphasis on their function in the politics of the German Colonial Department and the Colonial Society. The role of the colonies for National Socialist propaganda is later discussed and examines how the colonies as well as the fabricated memories of the colonies were used to influence the public in the 1930s. Such viewpoints of German cultural and political history offer an important insight that can be correlated with ethnological museum exhibitions at this time. While the authors acknowledge the importance of museums for influencing the public or playing a role in politics, exactly how ethnological museums were displaying the cultures of the non-Europeans from the colonies is missing.

Another important aspect to examine is the history of relevant sciences in Germany. As ethnology developed in Imperial Germany, so too did the field of physical anthropology and this is critical to address when examining historical ethnographic collections. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century ethnologists worked closely with physical anthropologists to understand the *Naturvölker*. A perceived link between the physical aspects of the 'races' gradually made its way into the ethnology museum guides as the visitor is first introduced to the different races before the material culture. During my time in the LMNM's ethnological storage room I regularly encountered human remains stored in boxes or commingled with other objects that is likely a remnant of treating the human remains as exotic objects

or something to be studied. This development seems almost inevitable considering at the same time the ethnology museum developed as part of the natural history museum and the subjects were often overlapping in the eyes of the early museum directors. The non-Europeans of the colonies were viewed as *Naturvolk* and displayed in the *Völkerschauen* as living in nature rather than *Kulturvolk*, which could be displayed in an art or other museum. It is worth noting that this us-and-them binary still exists in Oldenburg with the State Museum of Nature and Man (LMNM), housing natural, archaeological and the 'other' while the State Museum for Art and Cultural History houses the fine art of non-Europeans (archaeological objects) and cultural history of Germans. While it can be argued the Man part of the LMNM is in reference to the archaeological collection, one cannot help but make a link between the ethnological objects, these non-European cultures, and also Man in the title. The implication being Man equals the 'caveman' material culture as well as the non-European culture, hinting at the lingering idea of social Darwinism and the museum's portrayal of non-Europeans.

Historian Andrew Zimmerman's work *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (2001) and Andrew D. Evan's *Anthropology at War: World War I and the Science of Race in Germany* (2010) examine the development of the sciences, de-humanizing of the non-European and influence Charles Darwin's 1859 theory of natural selection had on German physical anthropological thought and the rise of Social Darwinism. The fact that influential German academics such as Adolf Bastian and Felix von Luschan were considered both ethnologists and physical anthropologists, an analysis of the historical development of this field must also be considered when examining texts and display methods. Zimmerman touches on this throughout his work given how close ethnology and physical anthropology were linked and discusses briefly the display tactics used by museums. Like Olusoga and Erichsen's work, Zimmerman and Evans focus a considerable amount of his research on



the influence these scientific fields had in politics and within the public sphere (and vice versa).

Much like the parable of the blind men and the elephant in which the blind men each touch a different part of an elephant and come to different conclusions as to the shape and nature of the elephant, the works and research described above were, in my point of view, all examining my research question without having a full answer. It is as Clifford (1988) puts it: It is important to analyze how powerful discriminations made at particular moments constitute the general system of objects within which valued artifacts circulate and makes sense (pp.220-21). In my research for the exhibition *Böser Wilder, friedlicher Wilder: Wie Museen das Bild anderer Kulturen prägen* I attempted to begin to provide a fuller context of the objects within the LMNM collection by looking at these histories and how they overlap with the LMNM collection; however due to time restraints to open the exhibition in the only available time slot for the museum and all of the work that comes with designing an exhibition by oneself, I had only begun to scratch the surface in terms of understanding the LMNM collection.