

CENTRAL AFRICAN COLLECTION RESEARCH PROJECT - REPORT SUMMARY

This report relates to research undertaken on the Royal Albert Memorial Museum's (RAMM's) Central African collection. This research was undertaken between January and March 2006 and was funded by the Designation Challenge Fund (DCF).

AIM

The DCF project proposal states that 'research is needed to establish the significance of the collections in the context of other material in this country and abroad'.

OBJECTIVES

- Produce a summary of the collection and collectors.
- Produce a summary of previous work on the collection.
- Assess the collection's importance in relation to other UK and international museums.
- Research the collection's geographical, historical and cultural background.
- Digitally photograph the collection and produce an illustrated catalogue.
- Undertake detailed research on specific objects and object types in the collection.
- Undertake detailed research on R.E. Dennett, the most significant collector.
- Obtain books and photocopies relating to collection for future use at RAMM.
- Prepare a bibliography and list sources of further information relating to the collection for further use at RAMM.
- Make suggestions for future uses of the collection.

BASELINE

Prior to this project, the Central Africa collection had been packed and organised, but few of the objects had been photographed - there were some black and white prints and colour slides, but no digital images. There was a basic record sheet and database entry for each object, which had been compiled from the accession register and record sheets. The only objects for which further identification and detailed information was available were those on display. RAMM had two books by R.E. Dennett, the most significant collector, and a number of general books and photocopied articles on Central African art and culture. Nineteen pieces, many from the Dennett collection, were on display in the permanent World Cultures gallery, while a further eleven were on temporary display in the African Metalwork exhibition (2005-2006).

Some research had been undertaken by various people on Dennett and his collection of religious artefacts, but this had never been followed through or published. Related material in RAMM's archives ranges from former RAMM curator Susan Pearce's 1973 correspondence, through correspondence with researchers in the 1990s and 2000's, to recent research by former RAMM curator Len Pole. All of this material has been used to inform the current project.

METHODOLOGY

- Examine and digitally photograph all of the objects in the collection.
- Collate related material from RAMM's database, photographic and paper archives.
- Identify other UK and international museums with related collections, and contact or visit these as appropriate.
- Identify libraries, archives and specialists with relevant information.
- Visit libraries and archives as appropriate, and contact specialists by email and telephone.
- Literature and internet research.