

CENTRAL AFRICAN COLLECTIONS AT OTHER MUSEUMS - A SURVEY

The section provides a summary of museums, other than RAMM, with Central African ethnography collections. This information has been compiled using the following sources: Wright (2002, *Museums Yearbook*), Schumann (1986, MEG survey) Idiens (undated, Perth catalogue), Pole (2000, South West Museums survey), Starkey (1998, North East Museums survey), Kwasnik (1994, Scottish museums survey), Proctor (1994, Dundee museums catalogue), Pennie (1991, *African Assortment: African Art in Museums in England and Scotland*). Each museum listed as having Central African objects, or fifty or more unspecified African objects, was contacted in 2006.

Some museums were able to send further information in the form of catalogue records, summaries and photographs - these have now been placed on file at RAMM. The project has enabled the main UK collections and collectors to be identified and the RAMM collection to be evaluated in relation to these.

Gillon (1984:301) notes that scholarly knowledge of Kuba art 'is based on the three great collections, those of Sheppard in 1892, Frobenius in 1905 and Torday in 1908. Some of the art objects collected by Sheppard are now at Hampton, Virginia. The Frobenius collection is in the Berlin Museum fur Volkerkunde and in other German museums. The objects brought home by Torday are in the Museum of Mankind [now the British Museum Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas], London'. William Sheppard was a black American missionary, Leo Frobenius was a 'German Africanist and ethnographer' (ibid: 186), and Emil Torday conducted ethnographic research in 1904, compiling a comprehensive report (ibid: 299-300). Illustrated books such as Lehuard (1980) and surveys such as Biebuyck (1985, 1986) list European and American museums with Central African collections. Biebuyck also surveys archival resources relating to the region's art.

Internationally, there are a great many museums with large Congo collections. The museums of many major European cities hold large Congo collections. The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium, founded by King Leopold II of the Belgians, houses the largest collection in Europe and perhaps the world. The two main collections in the United States of America are the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York, and the Museum of African Art (NMAfA), part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Also of special interest is Roger Casement's collection at the National Museum of Ireland, as he knew of Dennett and is a major figure in Congo history.

The largest UK collections are at the British Museum in London, the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) in Oxford, the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (CUMAA), and the World Museum, Liverpool. Other major ethnographic collections also have Central African material - those in Bristol, Brighton, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester, the Hancock Museum in Newcastle, the Horniman Museum in London and the Powell-Cotton Museum in Birchington, Kent. RAMM ranks

highly with these, largely due to the part which the Dennett collection can play in illuminating the history and culture of Central Africa.

The only other museum found to have Dennett material is the Pitt Rivers in Oxford, which houses two trophy ivory tusks presented by Dennett to the Folklore Society. The PRM collection is also of interest because it holds the collection of Victorian traveller Mary Kingsley, a close associate of Dennett's. Of particular interest is *Mavungu*, the power figure or 'nail fetish' which she collected, for which Dennett wrote the display label. The Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) holds Dennett's collection of glass lantern slides.

Other than these major collections, many non-specialist museums have collections of between a few and a few hundred Central African pieces. These are usually miscellaneous items donated by local people. Reading Museum's collection is of interest, because it has pieces from Forfeitt's collection, other parts of which are housed at Cambridge and the Horniman. Within the South West of England, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery has the most important Central African collection, with objects and related correspondence from two major missionary collectors.

MAJOR COLLECTIONS IN EUROPE

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF IRELAND, DUBLIN

The NMI holds at least two hundred Central African items. Roger Casement's Congo collection consists of about fifty objects, including a power-figure (459/39) obtained from a Cabinda trader, Senor Oliveira, in 1902. The database entry for this object reads: "*Pemba*" - a wooden figurine with a necklet made of various emblems; canoe, dog, slave, musical instruments etc. The use the fetish was put to was probably to drive away sickness (supposed to be due to witches) and to exorcise the witches'. His 'list of curiosities' which he wished to lend the museum includes 'An African Idol of Fetiche with all his attributes. This figure has been in "actual use" in the ChiLoango Country - north of the Congo mouth. It has all its "attributes" with it - caps and medicines and is a unique exemplar of African religious beliefs" (ibid.). The entire collection includes other objects also represented in the RAMM collection such as shields, weapons, 'women's fringes', fibre cloths and a 'native guitar'. Of particular interest from a historical point of view are a 'rubber basket - for bringing in indiarubber' and 'pair of Hand-cuffs - used by sentries and forest guards'. In a poignant letter in which he offers the collection on loan to the museum, Casement says that 'the loan would probably be many years - for I should not claim them until such time as I come home, for good, to settle in Ireland' (letter in NMI archives, 28 May, 1904). This never happened, as he was executed in 1916, on the grounds of high treason for his Irish nationalism.

ROYAL MUSEUM FOR CENTRAL AFRICA, TERVUREN, BELGIUM

This museum holds the most comprehensive Central African collections in Belgium, probably in Europe and even in the world. The museum's website notes that 'the Ethnography Section has a collection of around 180,000 objects, most of which have been collected on site by colonial administrators, missionaries and scientists since 1885' and that 'the figurative sculptures (masks, statues, etc.) are the most famous objects, but the collection also features important series of weapons, cups, combs and various other types of artifacts' and that 'the collection of Central Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) is by far the richest collection in the Ethnography Section'. Its collections are not listed on its website <<http://www.africamuseum.be/>> but the Central African artifacts probably number in the tens of thousands.

MAJOR COLLECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, NEW YORK

The African ethnographic collection dates back to 1869, the year when the museum was founded. The museum's website, <<http://anthro.amnh.org>>, states that 'the earliest collections were donated by or bought from missionaries; some material was obtained from European museums, auction houses, or received as gifts. At the end of the nineteenth century many explorers and travelers brought objects from Africa that were acquired by the Museum. The African collection is extensive in terms of geographic coverage. It includes North Africa, West Africa, and Madagascar, although its greatest concentration of material is from central and southern Africa. The entire collection with over 37,000 objects is available on-line'. In addition to objects there are photographs, images of the original catalogues, and in the case of the Lang Collection from North East Congo, field notes on-line.

Enid Schildkrout, a former curator AMNH, notes that its three main central African collections are that made by the Belgian Government, the Frederick Starr collection and the Lang expedition collection (personal communication, 2006). Hochschild explains that 'Frederick Starr, an oddball University of Chicago anthropologist who was a big believer in the inferiority of "primitive" peoples, revived one of Leopold's innumerable medals and a full-year, all-expenses-paid tour of the Congo. In return he produced a series of fifteen enthusiastic articles in the Chicago Daily Tribune under the heading "Truth about the Congo Free State", later reprinted as a book...' (2000: 244-245). A proportion of the AMNH collections were a gift from King Leopold II of the Belgians himself –: 'Leopold also gave more than three thousand Congo artifacts to the American Museum of Natural History, knowing that J.P. Morgan [a notorious racist and supporter of Leopold's Congo regime] was on its board' (ibid: 244). For further information about these collections, see Schildkrout and Keim (1998) and Schildkrout's article in Vogel (1988).

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON D.C.

This museum holds one of the USA's largest Central African collections, although the website does not state how many objects it holds. The extensive on-line catalogue, with illustrations and excellent captions, is available via <<http://www.nmfa.si.edu/>>.

MAJOR COLLECTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

THE BRITISH MUSEUM (BM) DEPARTMENT OF AFRICA, OCEANIA AND THE AMERICAS (LONDON)

According to Schumann (1986), the BM holds about 75,000 African artifacts. The British Museum has no on-line database, but the in-house database can be searched at the Centre for Anthropology. The database lists over 800 artifacts from the Republic of the Congo and almost 7,600 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The most significant source of Central African material is Emil Torday, with over 2,300 records. Hottott and Ridyard are also significant sources. The only large Central African collection in the photographic archives is also that of Torday, which numbers about 2,500 images. There are one or two thousand further Central African images.

The British Museum has a large number of Central African artifacts of all types on display in its Africa gallery.

THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY (CUMAA)

The CUMAA database is fully searchable on-line via the museum's website (<http://museum.archanth.cam.ac.uk/>). The database contains over 1,600 records for anthropology objects from Central Africa, most of which are catalogued as Zaire and/or Congo. The largest collection (just under 280 objects) was made by missionary Reverend Lawson Forfeitt before 1908. Some of these were donated via Dr. Jamieson B. Hurry. There are also collections from the Reverend Kenred Smith (88 objects) and Emil Torday (21 objects). All of these collections are varied, including clothing and personal adornments, religious figures and charms, containers and musical instruments, as well as weapons. The photographic archives contain almost 450 images from Congo and/or Zaire.

THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM (PRM). OXFORD

The PRM's collections contain 60,000 African artifacts, but it is difficult to tell from the on-line catalogue (accessible via <http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk>) exactly how many of these are from Central Africa. Important collectors include Emil Torday, Robert Hottott and Mary Kingsley.

The PRM collections contain the only examples of Dennett material yet to be found outside RAMM. These are two carved elephant tusks which Dennett presented to the Folklore Society in 1895, and which were later transferred to the PRM via CUMAA. These objects are trophies of Dennett's role as an ivory trader as well as a folklorist – one has a dated inscription with his name (1965.1.47) and the other is covered with classic Loango carvings (1965.1.46). Blier (1998: 211-213) discusses early carved tusks as well as later 'tourist' examples like these. The PRM's Mary Kingsley collection consists of

about 50 'West African' objects, including those from the Congo region, donated to the Museum by her brother on her death in 1900. The item most relevant to RAMM's collections is *Mavungu*, her Kongo power figure or 'nail fetish' (1900.39.70), which is on display at the PRM and is illustrated and discussed by Dennett (1906: frontispiece, 93-95). Dennett also wrote the display label for this artifact.

The PRM's Central African photographic archives are extensive, but they contain no Dennett material. The paper archives contain two letters from Mary Kingsley, as well as material relating to her *Mavungu* figure and lists of the Folklore Society's collections, including its Dennett material (1965.1.1-47, 1965.3.1-224). The museum's website includes an on-line exhibition called 'Congo Journey' (<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/congojourney/>), which 'makes available photographs and documents from the Pitt Rivers Museum's Hottot Collection, providing an on-line catalogue to the objects displayed in an exhibition of the same name held at the Pitt Rivers Museum in 2004'. The French explorer Robert Hottot's Expedition to Central Africa took place in 1908-9.

LIVERPOOL - WORLD MUSEUM LIVERPOOL

According to Schumann (1986), Liverpool holds 8,000 artifacts from sub-Saharan Africa. A substantial number of these are from Central Africa, many of which are currently on display in the World Cultures gallery. There are no artifacts from Dennett, but curator Zachary Kingdon notes that Dennett is mentioned in a letter in the museum's archives (9.8.98.43), addressed to Ridyard, Liverpool's main collector of African artifacts, from Shawcross, a trader in the Congo (personal communication 2006). Shawcross discusses sending two 'fetishes' to Ridyard, one of which is named *Mungurka*. He mentions Dennett, 'a great student of folk-lore amongst these natives', saying that he wanted to photograph *Mungurka* 'for reproduction in his new book'. Further research will be required to find out whether an object in Liverpool's collection matches an object in one of Dennett's books.

The museum's website includes very informative pages about the Central African collections and about Congo history and religion
<<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/humanworld/worldcultures/africa>>.

THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE (RAI)

The RAI photographic archives contain the only Dennett material so far identified outside of RAMM and the PRM. These consist of two boxes of glass lantern slides, each containing about fifty slides, one pertaining to the Congo and the other to Nigeria. There is little further information accompanying the slides, but the RAI archives do contain Dennett's membership forms.

OTHER CENTRAL AFRICAN COLLECTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

ABERDEEN - MARISCHAL MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), this museum holds some 1,000 African artifacts, but most of these are Nigerian. No further information has been obtained.

BELFAST - ULSTER MUSEUM

Schumann (1986) indicates that Belfast houses almost 500 Sub-Saharan African items. Recent correspondence, however, indicates that very little of this is Central African and most of it is weaponry and shields.

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), Birmingham's collections contain up to 200 objects from Sub-Saharan Africa. Curator Chris Wingfield explains that 'there are relatively few objects from the Congo, and those that there are were collected by Baptist missionary George Grenfell' (personal communication, 2006). A temporary exhibition of the Grenfell collection is on display in Birmingham in 2006. This collection is of particular interest because Grenfell's name appears as a witness in documents relating to Casement's investigations into the Congo Free State atrocities, for example those held in the Anti-Slavery Society archives, Rhodes House, University of Oxford.

BOLTON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), Bolton holds some 500 African artifacts. A telephone conversation with the curator confirmed that the Central African collections include items from Ridyard, also Liverpool's main collector of African artifacts, and a loom for making raffia cloth.

BOURNEMOUTH - THE RUSSELL-COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

According to the Pole (2000), Bournemouth holds just under 30 Central African artifacts. No further information has been obtained.

BRIGHTON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), most of Brighton's circa 2,500 African artifacts are from West Africa. Although the Museum's website (<http://www.brighton.virtualmuseum.info/>) includes pictures of a selection of objects, there is no facility to search the full database. No further information has been obtained.

BRISTOL MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Pole (2000) notes that this museum has over 900 Central African artifacts, including

everyday items, textiles and religious artifacts, as well as colonial objects such as whips.

Curator Sue Giles says notes that 'the majority of the collections came from two missionaries, Reverends Kenred Smith and Charles Pugh. Smith was working there before and perhaps after 1915 (the collection was sold in two lots, one about 1915 and one 1940s), Pugh was probably there in the 1920s and 1930s. There are letters from Smith with some information' (personal communication, 2006). Kenred Smith is also one of CUMAA'S main collectors of Central African material.

CHELTENHAM ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), Cheltenham holds over 170 African items, mostly from West Africa. A 2006 database search found only four Congo items.

DUNDEE ART GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS

According to Schumann (1986), Dundee houses about 500 items from Nigeria and the Congo. Further information about is available in their 'Cultures of the World' catalogue (Proctor 1994).

EDINBURGH - NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF SCOTLAND

According to Kwaznik (1994), NMS has about 1,200 Central African artifacts. The museum will undertake further research into its Central Africa collections during 2006.

GLASGOW MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, KELVINGROVE

Curator Patricia Allan explains that 'there are about 800 objects from what we have classified as Central Africa. Our main donors are W.B. Scott, a ship's engineer who donated a collection of 244 items from Kassai and the Upper Congo in 1910 and Thomas Livingstone who, in 1877, donated about 60 objects collected by his father the Scottish Missionary David Livingstone. We do not have any objects donated by R.E. Dennett. Our collections include Kuba, Luba and Showa objects in the form of masks, textiles, cups, boxes, stools, mats, weapons and domestic utensils. There have been no publications on our Central African collections per se but the African Collections as a whole have been described by Antonia Lovelace in "The African Collections at Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum" in the Journal of Museums Ethnography no.3 (October 1991). Julian Jacobs (1986) published 'African Art at the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum' in African Arts XIX:2:28-40' (personal communication, 2006).

IPSWICH MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), Ipswich has about 2,000 artifacts from Central Africa. A telephone conversation with the curator (2006) confirmed that the Central African collections are small and mostly consist of more recent material, including printed cloths.

KING'S LYNN

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service's collections database (<http://www.culturalmodes.norfolk.gov.uk/projects/nmaspub5.asp>) is currently in development. The database covers Thetford, Norwich and King's Lynn's collections. Although Schumann (1986) said that there were 70 African objects at this museum, a recent search of the in-house database only listed 17.

LONDON - CUMING MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), the Cuming Museum holds 'hundreds' of African artifacts. About ten of these are Central African.

LONDON - HORNIMAN MUSEUM AND GARDENS

According to Schumann (1986), this museum holds circa 5,000 African artifacts. The collections database is not on-line, but curator Hassan Arero says that the in-house database contains basic records and photographs. He notes that 'most of our collections will be post-war and thus probably younger than the Exeter collections' (personal communication, 2006).

LONDON - KEW GARDENS ECONOMIC BOTANY COLLECTIONS

The majority of Kew's 700 Central African specimens are raw plant materials, with only about 10 ethnographic items. Kew's collections from Dr. Livingstone's Zambesi expeditions have been extensively researched and although these are from East Africa, they could be of interest in telling the story of Stanley's exploration of the Congo River and the subsequent colonisation of the region. Further collections from Livingstone's expeditions are housed in Glasgow.

LONDON - UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON (UCL)

Schumann (1986) indicates that at that date, UCL held about 500 artifacts from Sub-Saharan Africa. No further information has been obtained.

MANCHESTER MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), Manchester houses over 5,500 African artifacts. Further catalogue research would be required to find out how many of these are Central African.

MIDDLESBOROUGH - DORMAN MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), the Middlesborough Leisure & Amenities Department then held over 100 African artifacts. These may have been transferred to Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, but no further information has been obtained.

NEWCASTLE - HANCOCK MUSEUM

According to Starkey (1998), the Hancock Museum holds almost 1,500 African artifacts, some of which are from Central Africa.

NEWPORT MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Schumann (1986) notes that Newport had 'some' Zaire material, but does not detail how much. Researcher Rowena Hill explains that 'the Congo material was once the largest section of the Newport ethnography collection - it had circa 60 objects in total. The main collector was Reverend White, a Baptist Missionary in the Stanley Falls area' (personal communication, 2006).

NORTHAMPTON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), Northampton Museum and Art Gallery then held almost 100 African artifacts. No further information has been obtained.

NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service's collections database (<http://www.culturalmodes.norfolk.gov.uk/projects/nmaspub5.asp>) is currently in development. The database covers Thetford, Norwich and King's Lynn's. Although the MEG 1986 survey said that there were 60-70 African objects at this museum, a 2006 search of the in-house database only listed 17.

NOTTINGHAM CASTLE MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), Nottingham holds some 300 African artifacts. The earliest African objects were accessioned when the museum opened in 1878. Some of these may be Central African, but most are Nigerian.

NUNEATON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Schumann (1986), Nuneaton then held over 400 African artifacts. No further information has yet been obtained.

PLYMOUTH CITY MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Pole (2000), Plymouth holds about 25 Central African artifacts.

POOLE WATERFRONT MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), Poole holds some 150 African items. No further information is currently available about how many of them are Central African.

POWELL-COTTON MUSEUM, BIRCHINGTON, KENT

According to Schumann (1986) this museum, which houses only objects collected by Major Powell-Cotton, holds some 16,500 Sub-Saharan African artifacts, some of which are Central African. The museum's website (<http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/>) includes pages about Powell-Cotton's 1904-07 Congo trip, illustrated with archival photographs.

READING MUSEUM SERVICE

Schumann (1986) indicates that Reading Museum had 176 African artifacts at that date. Curator Elaine Blake notes that the museum has 'a collection of African artifacts including an important group of Congolese items collected by Rev. J. Lawson Forfeitt (Baptists Missionary Society) and presented to the Museum in 1890. Some of the most significant items from this group were lent to the Horniman Museum in 1952 and should appear in their records' (personal communication, 2006). The 35 items in the Forfeitt collections were donated through Jamison B. Hurry. All of Reading's collections are catalogued and photographed on an in-house database. Forfeitt and Hurry are also CUMAA's most important sources of Central African artifacts.

ROCHESTER - GUILDHALL MUSEUM

Schumann (1986) indicates that Rochester has about 100 African items. Curator Stephen Nye notes that only a few have been identified as Central African (personal communication, 2006). A club and battle-axe are of particular interest as they are said to have been used on Stanley's expeditions.

ROSSENDALE MUSEUM, LANCASHIRE

According to Schumann (1986), Rossendale then held almost 200 African artifacts. However, curator Sandra Cruise explains that 'most of our African material was returned/transferred to Liverpool Museum (William Brown Street, Liverpool) and the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, some years ago' (personal communication, 2006).

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM, ESSEX

This museum's collection contains circa 25 Central African items.

SHEFFIELD GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS TRUST

According to Schumann (1986), Sheffield holds some 400 African artifacts. Curator Gill Woolrich explains that a 1995/6 audit identified over a 1,000 African objects but that the catalogue card need to be consulted to find out how many are Central African.

STIRLING SMITH ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

According to Kwaznik (1994), the Stirling holds about 50 Central African artifacts.

SWINDON MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

According to Pole (2000), Swindon holds about 22 Central African artifacts.

TORQUAY MUSEUM

According to Pole (2000), the Torquay Museum holds about 17 Central African artifacts. Curator Barry Chandler notes that some of the Congo material will be displayed in the forthcoming 'explorers' gallery (personal communication, 2006).

NORWICH - SAINSBURY CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA

The Sainsbury collection contains just a few specimens from Central Africa, which are of excellent quality and include power figures.

WISBECH AND FENLAND MUSEUM

According to Schumann (1986), Wisbech holds over 150 African items. No further information has been obtained.