

German Colonial Restitution Monitor (Status: 10 February 2026)

<https://dekolonial-erinnern.de/german-colonial-restitution-monitor/>

- > Collaborative work in progress, to be continuously updated.
- > Covers only material cultural heritage (cultural belongings) from colonial contexts.
- > Lists specific commitments by public institutions in Germany (date of decision).
- > Physical return or transfer of ownership may still pending in some cases.
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Country of origin	Belongings	German institutions	Status of restitution/return	Comments
Australia 2023	Four belongings from Kurna indigenous community (spear, digging stick, club and net)	Ethnological Museum Dresden	Decision to return by State Government of Saxony as owner of the museum in recognition of identity-forming nature for Kurna community. Handed over to Kurna representatives on 16 August 2023 in Australia by staff of Dresden Museum. Return completed.	Belongings sent to Germany in 1839 by missionaries of Lutheran Mission Dresden. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock delivered speech at ceremony on 3 May 2024 in Australia.
Australia 2025	Three belongings from the Eastern Maar indigenous community special spiritual significance (“sacred items”)	Ethnological Museum Berlin	On December 1, 2025, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation authorised President Marion Ackermann to hold discussions with the relevant authorities in Australia to find a solution for restitution.	This decision is of general significance since it could not be verified if the appropriation of the belongings happened in a manner that was legally or ethically unjustifiable within the meaning of the “ Common Guidelines ”. The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation provides the following reason for restitution : “No specific acts of violence have been reported, but there was at least an indirect context of injustice due to

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				previous acts of violence against the indigenous Australians of the region: between 1833 and the 1860s, numerous massacres and persecutions took place.”
Cameroon 2024	28 royal belongings such as throne stools, ceremonial fronds, swords from Nso' community.	Linden Museum Stuttgart	At the German-Cameroonian cultural dialogue on 16 January 2024 in Stuttgart, Minister of Science, Research and Arts Petra Olschowski announced decision by State Government of Baden-Württemberg as co-owner of Linden Museum to return the 28 Nso' belongings. Return has not happened yet.	As equal co-owner of Linden Museum, City of Stuttgart consented.
Cameroon 2022	Royal beaded bracelet and small bag with medicine from Nso' community.	Department of Anthropology & African Studies at Mainz University	In 2022, the Department decided to return the two culturally sensitive belongings. Return has not happened yet.	Belongings looted by German colonial officer Hans Houben in 1902. First transferred to Linden Museum Stuttgart, in Mainz since 1971.
Cameroon 2022	Ngonnso'	Ethnological Museum Berlin	In June 2022, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation authorised President Parzinger to return Ngonnso'. Return has not happened yet.	The decision to return Ngonnso' to Cameroon was based on argument of unequal power relations and colonial violence. In addition, spiritual role of Ngonnso' as mother deity was recognised.

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Columbia 2023	Two masks of Kogui indigenous community from Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Columbia	Ethnological Museum Berlin	Belongings presented to Colombian President Gustavo Petro by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at ceremony on 16 June 2023 in President's Office Berlin. Handed over to community of Kogui on 28 June 2023 .	Belongings brought to Berlin in 1915 by Konrad Theodor Preuss, curator of North American collections at Ethnological Museum. In preparation for return, masks were detoxified to remove contamination with biocides.
Columbia 2024	Three cultural belongings connected to masks listed above: staff, headpiece, basket	Ethnological Museum Berlin	After restitution of masks, the Kogui community asked for further belongings translocated by Konrad Theodor Preuss (see above). On 29 October 2024, Germany's Minister of Environment, Steffi Lemke, handed belongings over to Colombian authorities on the sidelines of United Nations Biodiversity Conference COP 16 in Cali/Columbia. Corresponding transfer of ownership was decided at Board meeting of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation on 18 December 2024. On 10 February 2025, Columbia's ambassador and SPK president signed contract for transfer of ownership .	Announcing the decision, SPK President Herrmann Parzinger referred to United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). In addition to the three belongings, sound recordings made by Preuss at various locations in Colombia, including documentation, were presented to Colombian partners in digital form on 29 October 2024.

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Ghana 2025	Four belongings from Kpando in present-day Ghana, two drums and two horns. All four belongings contain human remains in the form of skulls and lower jaws.	Ethnological Museum Berlin	On December 1, 2025, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation authorised President Marion Ackermann to conclude an agreement with the competent authorities in Ghana on the repatriation of these belongings.	The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation was able to quickly resolve the question of to whom the belongings should be returned. It provides the following reason for restitution : “They were appropriated in terms of time and space in the context of the violent expansion of German colonial rule in the Volta region.”
Namibia 2024	Cartridge belt of Kahimemua Nguvauva, leader of Ovambanderu community	Municipal Museum of Braunschweig (Brunswick)	City Council of Braunschweig voted unanimously in favour of restitution on 11 June 2024 . Municipal administration will now consult with German authorities to whom the item will be returned.	Restitution supported by Government of Namibia and German Foreign Office.
Namibia 2022	23 belongings (historical everyday objects, jewellery, tools and fashion)	Ethnological Museum Berlin	Returned as loan in 2022, followed by transfer of ownership to Government of Namibia in 2024.	Belongings were selected by Namibian expert group, including National Museum of Namibia, due to special historical, cultural and aesthetic significance.
Namibia 2019	Stone Cross	German Historical Museum Berlin	Returned to Government of Namibia.	In 1486, Portuguese erected Stone Cross north of Swakopmund. In 1893 translocated to Berlin by German colonial authorities.

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Namibia 2018	Family bible and riding whip of Nama leader Hendrik Witbooi	Linden Museum Stuttgart	As co-owner of Linden Museum, State Government of Baden-Württemberg decided in November 2018 to return belongings to Government of Namibia.	As equal co-owner of Linden Museum City of Stuttgart consented.
Namibia 1996	Witbooi Journals II and III	Übersee-Museum Bremen	Two out of four journals kept by Nama leader Hendrik Witbooi. Returned to Government of Namibia.	Journals handed over to then Namibian President Sam Nujoma on state visit to Germany
New Zealand 2026	Māori taonga („Pou of Hinematioro“)	University of Tübingen	In 2024, government of New Zealand sent a formal restitution request. University of Tübingen will return the belonging in March 2026.	British seafarer Captain James Cook took the Pou with him on his stay in New Zealand, October 1769. Belonging was later passed to private collector in Vienna, then to ethnology collection of University of Tübingen in 1937.
Nigeria 2022	Benin Bronzes	As recorded by German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts , 1.259 Benin Bronzes held by 18 German museums.	In July 2022, Nigeria and Germany signed Joint Declaration for unconditional transfer of ownership for all Benin Bronzes in Germany to National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM).	On visit to Nigeria in December 2022, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Cultural Commissioner Claudia Roth handed over 22 Benin Bronzes to NCMM. Some Benin Bronzes to stay in German museums as loan.
Samoa	Boat stem. In 1888.	Übersee-Museum	On 8 April 2024, the Minister of	During her visit to Samoa in July

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2024	German warship "Adler" took possession of a Samoan war canoe. Commander Wilhelm Souchon received the stem, which he donated to Übersee-Museum in 1932.	Bremen (owner: City of Bremen)	Education and Culture of Samoa submitted return request to Mayor of Bremen on behalf of Samoan government. On 18 June 2024, Senate (City government) of Bremen decided on restitution of stern to State of Samoa for ethical reasons. Costs of repatriation will be borne by Germany's Foreign Office	2024, State Minister Katja Keul of Germany's Foreign Office handed over the stern to Government of Samoa. Stem will be on display at National University of Samoa from September 2024 in exhibition developed jointly with Übersee-Museum Bremen.
Tanzania 2022	Unspecified belongings	Ethnological Museum Berlin	In June 2022, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation authorised President Parzinger to return unspecified belongings related to anti-colonial wars in German East Africa. Return has not happened yet.	Belongings will be part of Tanzania Exhibition jointly curated by Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, Foundation Humboldt Forum and National Museum of Tanzania, opening October 2024 at Humboldt Forum Berlin.
USA (Hawai'i) 2023	Seven burial artefacts (spear, calabashes, stone disk)	Ethnological Museum Berlin	At end of 2021, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation decided to return belongings together with ancestral remains held by Museum of Prehistory and Early History Berlin. Belongings were handed over to Hui Iwi Kuamo'o (organization of Hawaiian First Nations) representing	Belongings were taken from burial sites by Eduard Arning around 1885.

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			the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in April 2023.	
USA (South Dakota) 2021	Shirt that belonged to Chief Daniel Hollow Horn Bear (Mato He Oklogeca) of the Teton Lakota indigenous community	Weltkulturen Museum (Frankfurt am Main)	As owner of the museum, Cultural Department of the City of Frankfurt agreed to return. Entity handed over to Chief Daniel Hollow Horn Bear's great-grandson Chief Duane Hollow Horn Bear, 12 June 2021 in Rose Bud, South Dakota.	Museum acquired entity from American Museum of Natural History (New York) in 1908, which had received it as donation by James Graham Phelps Stokes. Further provenance details unknown. For 30 years on permanent loan to Offenbach Leather Museum.
USA (Alaska) 2018	Nine burial artefacts from indigenous groups in Chugach region (Southwestern Alaska)	Ethnological Museum Berlin	Upon knowing that belongings were from plundered grave, Board of Trustees of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation decided in December 2017 to return them after consulting with Chugach Alaska Corporation, to be handed over to indigenous communities. Formal restitution on 16 May 2018.	Grave goods brought to Berlin by Johan Adrian Jacobsen in the 1880s from a collecting expedition commissioned by Berlin's Royal Museum of Ethnology, precursor of today's Ethnological Museum.
Zimbabwe 2003	Soap stone bird from Great Zimbabwe era	Ethnological Museum Berlin	Returned as permanent loan to President of Zimbabwe, later turned over to National Museums and Monuments Zimbabwe (NMMZ).	Legal option of permanent loan chosen to avoid formal procedures for restitution.