

Presseinformation

Museum am Rothenbaum

Rothenbaumchaussee 64 | 20148 Hamburg Germany | markk-hamburg.de

MARKK launches provenance research project on the Hamburg South Sea Expedition

August 23, 2023 - The Hamburg South Sea Expedition took place between 1908 and 1910 and brought extensive collections from German colonial territories to Hamburg. The two-year provenance research project examines their acquisition circumstances in the colonial context during the first of two expedition voyages and is dedicated to the interaction of academic research, economics and colonial power. The project is being completed in cooperation with partners in Papua New Guinea and the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung. It is funded by the German Lost Art Foundation.

Barbara Plankensteiner, Director of the MARKK: "The South Sea Expedition was one of Hamburg's largest research projects at the beginning of the 20th century and pursued clear colonial and economic goals. An analysis of the unjust contexts of the object and data collection that took place within the framework of this project is a basic prerequisite for beginning a dialogue with representatives of the successor societies about the future handling of this inventory. We are very pleased that the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung and the German Lost Art Foundation are supporting our first step in processing this colonial heritage, which will certainly be followed by further steps."

The First Voyage of the Hamburg South Seas Expedition 1908/1909: The Colonial Acquisition of the Ethnographic Collections.

The Hamburg South Seas Expedition accumulated more than 12,000 objects, about half of them in the first year, a large number of field notes and close to 1,700 photographs and sketches. In addition, a report of the results was published in 30 volumes. The journey took place in cooperation with the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung and the former Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, now MARKK. This provenance research project's first step is dedicated to examining the original source material in order to illuminate the contexts of the ethnographic collections established in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea during the year 1908/09. In the second step, the reconstruction of the colonial sources will be compared with the local cultural memory together with partners from Papua New Guinea, as well as supplemented and re-evaluated by local knowledge traditions. In this way, interpretive sovereignties will be renegotiated, the relevance of the objects will be discussed and their usefulness for future generations will be debated. The research results will be shared with local partners and the need for potential restitution will be explored on their terms.

Cooperation with the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung (HWS)

As early as 1907, the year in which the HWS was founded, it was decided to finance the South Seas Expedition. This decision was largely the initiative of Georg Thilenius (1868-1937), who, as director of the Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg since 1904, had been driving the expansion of the collection and raising the profile of the museum. In the following years, the expedition and the publication of its results were funded with 600,000 Reichsmark, thus enabling the implementation of one of the most comprehensive research projects of the German colonial period directly linked to a museum. In this context, both institutions are eager to explore the colonial

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context of the expedition project. Both the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung's networks and documentation, as well as the MARKK's collection and archival holdings, form starting points for this new provenance research project.

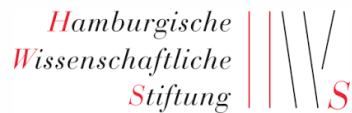
The results of the project will be published on the museum's website as part of the successive online presentation of the collections, as well as the results being presented through a public lecture.

Dr. Ekkehard Nümann, President of the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung:
"The South Seas Expedition is still the largest project that the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung has supported in its long history. What did this expedition explore and how did the expedition members proceed at the time? This will be examined and processed together with our partners in Papua New Guinea. The research project will shed light on an expedition that must be understood in its colonial and economically driven orientation. We as the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung see the expedition as part of our history and hope to gain new insights that we will face."

Funded by the German Lost Art Foundation



In cooperation with the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung



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Press Images:



Uli Figure

Artist not documented
New Ireland, Papua New Guinea
Acquired by Franz and Frida Boluminski
Acquired by Wilhelm Müller, October 1908
H 155 cm
Inv. no. 502 I
© MARKK, Photo: Paul Schimweg



Carved wooden vessel with handles

Artist not documented
Manus Province: "Lambutiu", Papua New Guinea
Acquired by Wilhelm Müller-Wismar, November 1909
H 36 cm, W 54 cm, D 41 cm
Inv. no. 854 I
© MARKK, Photo: Paul Schimweg

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Objects acquired during the Hamburg South Seas Expedition after their arrival at the museum

Photographer not documented

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The expedition ship "Peiho" on the Sepik River

Photograph by Friedrich Fülleborn

Inv. no. 2.803

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