

# GUSTAV CONRAU’S CAMEROON COLLECTION IN THE BERLIN ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM



Bangwa (Grasslands) and Balong, Barombi, Banyang (Woodlands) Statues

1 Gustav Conrau (Zintgraff, 1895, p. 384)

Gustav Conrau’s Bangwa (also Bangwe, Ngwe) collection is still considered to be one of the most important collections in the Berlin Ethnological Museum, although only 19 of the original 40 statues are still in Berlin. Krieger brought ten statues to the public’s attention in 1965; Lintig did the same for nine in 1994 and one more in 2001. In 1990, objects were returned from Leipzig to Berlin which had been missing since the 2nd World War (Höpfner 1993), including seven statues not mentioned by these authors. Another two missing pieces were identified in this study. For the time being the museum designates them as „NLS“ (un-numbered) and they are not considered to be part of the Conrau Collection. Of the 21 missing statues, five, which were identifiable thanks to inventory book entries and their related files, were delivered to the Berlin dealer Arthur Speyer II in the 1920s. Nothing is indicated in the documentation under review, nor in the files or the inventory book, which would justify releasing the remaining 16 pieces. We must conclude that the disappearance without trace of more than 50% of the original stock is due to the looting of the Conrau Bangwa

statue collection and is probably unique in the history of the Ethnological Museum’s collection. Amazingly, Conrau and his collections have rarely been eval-

	originally	now in Berlin	to Speyer	missing
Male statues	14	7+1=8	3	3
Female statues	7	2+1=3	1	3
Two-legged human-animal statues	7	2	0	5
Double statues (man-woman)	3	1	0	2
Staff statues	4	2	1	1
Four-legged animal statues	5	3	0	2
Total	40	17+2=19	5	16

uated and never at the initiative of the museum (Harter 1986 Lintig 1994), although one of the most famous African sculptures - at times described as a „Bangwa Queen“, a „Princess“, or even a „Dancer“ - made Conrau world famous. The standing statue on the cover of Art & Context 07 is less well known, though it too was collected by Conrau in 1899 in the Bangwa region. Today it features as number IIIC10524 in the Museum of Ethnology. The inventory book refers to „25. desgl 52.5 cm h“. The statue is thus 52.5 cm high and was number 25 in Conrau’s collection. „desgl.“ refers to the text for number IIIC10522: „atûmpë. Standing wooden male statue“. The Bangwa name that was mentioned to Conrau was atûmpë. The first number in the Conrau collection (IIIC10513) also refers to the acquisition file: „1015/99 G. Conrau purchase“. There were three „standing wooden male statues“, of which numbers IIIC10522 and IIIC10524 are still available today.

Although no image of this extremely expressive and very rare or, more precisely, unique statue was produced until 1928 in an article by Mansfeld<sup>1</sup> and then described in 1930 by Sydow (Sydow 1930, p. 254), it has only been exhibited once to date (Beumers 1992, table 40) and is barely mentioned in the literature.

- Several questions led to my working on this article, namely:
- \* Why has this statue only been exhibited once?
  - \* What did this statue signify for the Bangwa?
  - \* Which Bangwa statues are missing in the Berlin museum and where are they today?
  - \* Who was Gustav Conrau?
  - \* Do other Conrau collections exist?
  - \* What can be concluded about the collection context?
  - \* What is known about people who collected other Bangwa statues?
  - \* When were Bangwa statues first mentioned, drawn or photographed?
  - \* Which statues have never yet been exhibited or published?

the head) might potentially be assignable to this figure. In the „African statues“ category alone there are more than 80 un-numbered statues (approximately 6-7% of the whole stock), as well as at least 100 fragments. Finally, this study argues that ethnological procedure should change. From the exhibitions held by the museum it is abundantly clear that, once decided upon, the same old canon of „masterpieces“ is propagated indefinitely. There is no attempt to obtain an overview of the whole existing stock of an ethnic group in as many museums and private collections as possible and a systematic search for new, unknown pieces takes place too rarely.

It is not possible to address all these issues in a single article. Therefore the following partial reports will be published:

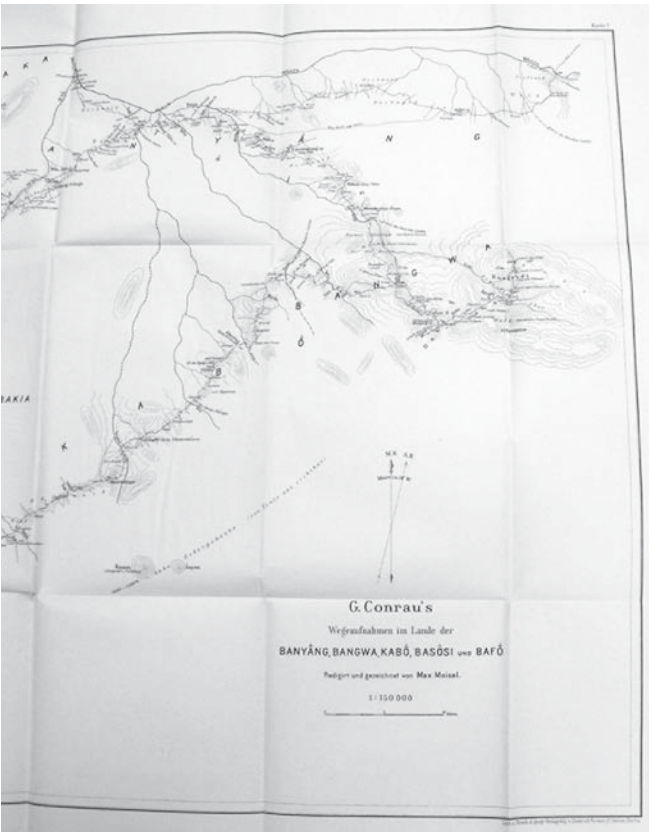
Part 1	A	The Bangwa, Gustav Conrau an subsequent events
	B	The Conrau collection and written correspondence with Luschan
	C	On contextual issues pertaining to the Conrau collections
Part 2	D	The Bangwa statues in the Berlin Ethnological Museum
	E	On European prejudices – the inconsistent reception of the Bangwa statues
	F	Other Bangwa statues in museums and private collections
Part 3	G	Cameroon woodlands statues in the Conrau collection

## A. The Bangwa, Gustav Conrau and subsequent events



5. a+b Bangwa statue IIIC10524

However, this study is not only about the statues in the Bangwa and Conrau collections. This material also allows us to draw more general conclusions, for instance regarding „collecting in the colonial period“, i.e. the local context in which the statues were acquired. Moreover, an exchange of letters demonstrates that Conrau was collecting on behalf of the museum, which has not been considered in the literature to date, and that the physician and ethnographer Felix von Luschan (1854-1924) - at that time still Deputy Director to Adolf Bastian (1826 -1905) – was already collecting in a highly focused manner around 1900. Further research is conducted on the inventory taking because the fact that two previously unnumbered pieces („NLS“) could be identified in this study, also shows that the museum had not completed this task itself. The restoration materials are similarly investigated since one of the statues is headless, suggesting that a fragment (i.e.



6. Section of a map of the Bangwa region according to Conrau, travel photos by Max Moisel, 1899 (in Conrau 1899)

Since the German colonial era „Bangwa“ has designated the inhabitants of the nine chiefdoms Fontem, Fozimognndi, Fozi-

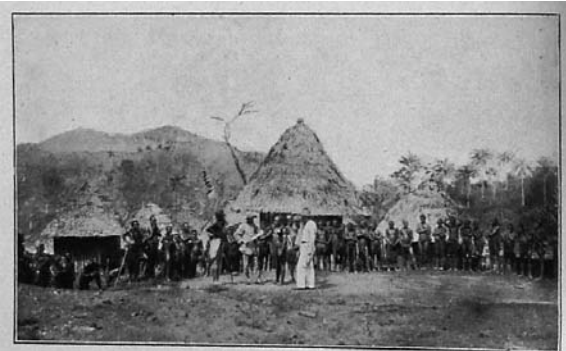


2. Bangwa statue NLS503, unidentified to date, number IIIC10528

3. Bangwa statue NLS481, unidentified to date, number IIIC10526



mombin, Fossungo, Fonjumetor, Fotabong I, Photo Dungatet, Foreke Chacha and Fotabong III. The roughly 30,000 people<sup>2</sup> live in an approximately 50 klm2 transition area between elevated grassland and tropical forest land in the west of the Cameroon grasslands, in a mountainous region, which borders in the south on the forest land of Mbo, in the west on the Banyang region and the sources of the Cross River, in the north on the Mundani and Bamenda mountains, and in the east on the volcanic plateau of Bamiléké<sup>3</sup>. Their language is described as Bantoid. It belongs to the Niger-Congo language family and is closely related to the languages of Western Bamileke.



7. Village square in Fontem approx. 1901 (in Strümpell 1921, p. 38)

The first mention of the name Bangwa was in 1886 by the explorer Bernard Schwartz. A slave who lived near Richardson’s US Baptist mission in the Cameroon woodlands said „... he was from a town far to the north... which was called *Baliniam* and was on a large lake named *Anji*. White men (*Arabs*) often came there to trade. It was a ten days’ walk away via nineteen stations, namely *Messinge*, *Elumbe*, *Messinge ba Kake*, *Kumba*, *Kimendi*, *Baluma*, *Akonje*, *Eboloko*, *Nongo Madiba*, *Batom*, *Bakundu ba Limsi*, *Esaasi*, *Phona*, *Makunje*, *Mani-anke*, *Babe*, *Bangwa*, *Bellikam* and *Beta*.” (Schwartz 1886, p. 270)

But not until the reign of Asonganyi<sup>4</sup> (around 1880-1952) did the Bangwa allow the first visit by a European, from 11 to 15 December 1898<sup>5</sup>. Gustav Conrau, a German businessman, collector of ethnographic objects, recruiter, elephant hunter<sup>6</sup> and Africa- traveller, wrote to Felix von Luschan from Cameroon in a letter of 18 February 1899: „I was now in the land of the Bangwa, SE (south-east, author’s note) of the Banyang, which, at that time, no European had yet visited.”<sup>7</sup> That year Conrau lived for several months in Fontem and the surrounding region.<sup>8</sup>

In a letter dated 1 October 1899, he reported from Victoria, a town on the southern slopes of Mount Cameroon (called Limbe today): „The Bangwa are not a large population. They do not have villages, but live scattered among the mountains in individual farmsteads. The most powerful and most-feared chief is called Fontem. His entourage consists almost exclusively of slaves. He is an important slave trader, who controls the slave trade between the northern frontier tribes and the woodlands. He sells or kills any man who has fallen into his disfavour and thus depletes his people. (...) To the south and east of the Bangwa region live the Bamileke.”<sup>9</sup> More information is provided by Kurt Strümpell, an officer of the German colonial army in Cameroon, who visited the Bangwa for the first time in 1901: „At that time we knew very little about

the Bangwa. Conrau, the only European who had dared to go into their mountains, had reported that they were wild and warlike, but that their chief, Fontem, was intelligent and energetic, that they lived in a rugged mountainous region, whose valleys were covered in dense jungle, whose steep slopes were overgrown with oil palm, and that savanna grass grew on the mountains“ (Strümpell 1921 p.35).

Little is known about Conrau himself. In 1890 he went to Cameroon as a salesman for the company Jantzen & Thormählen (Deutsche Kolonialzeitung 1900, p. 60). His father was a gamekeeper and lived in 1898/99, at the time of the correspondence with the Berlin museum, in Minden, Westphalia. Franz Hutter, a Bavarian officer, mentions an encounter with Conrau in mid-June of 1892 at the Mi-Yimbi station, a trading post of Jantzen and Thormählen (Hutter, 1902, p.139). The German Cameroon researcher Eugen Zintgraff writes in his book on the expedition to Bali in the Cameroon hinterland (1891): „Mr. Conrau, an agent for the company Jantzen & Thormählen, joined this caravan to replace the deceased Mr Nehber. In Mr. Conrau, whom I had particularly requested for Cameroon, the trading expedition obtained a leader who was suitable in every respect to replace his predecessor because he was, like the latter, well educated, of noble sentiment, and very modest. He combined these qualities with a rare ability to treat the indigenous population properly.” (Zintgraff 1895, p. 391). Conrau himself published four articles about his travels in Cameroon, one in the magazine Globus and three in Danckelmann’s ‘Reports from Explorers and Scholars in the German Protectorates’. It is not entirely clear when and how he died. Strümpell writes in retrospect: „Because - in October



8. Bangwa chief Asonganyi (Fon), around 1899

1899 - a rumour had reached the coast that the Ekoi had (...) eaten Lieutenant v. Queis, it was then said that Conrau had been murdered<sup>10</sup> by the Bangwa. The news was confirmed. However, the worthy man, who had been in the service of Dr. Zintgraffs, then at Jantzen & Thormählen, later an elephant-hunter, recruiter and researcher, and was now destined to work for GNK<sup>11</sup> at the Cross River, had not been murdered. While fleeing from the Bangwa, he had put the last bullet in his pistol in his own head, so as not to fall alive into the hands of his cruel blood-brother Fontem, who blamed him for the death of the Bangwa who had succumbed to fever in the Victoria plantation.” (Strümpell 1921, p. 34)

Neither Lintig nor the historian Florian Hoffmann mention the report by Lanschi, Conrau’s interpreter and companion, whom the painter Ernst Vollbehr sketched<sup>12</sup> around 1910 during his Cameroon trip. Here the background to Conrau’s death becomes clearer: „At the time when Mr. Conrau lived in Banguba, I was a plantation worker. I was to accompany Mr. Conrau into the hinterland to recruit workers and buy rare artifacts. When we got to the border, the villagers of Mbo, which lies at the entrance to the Bangwa region, told us that there was shooting there. But we went in anyway and the old chief Fontem (Asonganyi, author’s note) greeted my boss and even gave him a goat, plantains (i.e. bananas) and some palm oil. The next morning we went into the chief’s compound and questioned him about rare artifacts (ethnographic objects). But he didn’t want to give us any. Instead he inquired where his subjects were, whom he had previously given to Mr Conrau to work on the coast. Then Mr. Conrau told him that some of them had died because they couldn’t take the coastal food. In answer to this Fontem claimed that he had heard from neighbouring people that the white man had killed all his subjects. Mr. C. said this was not the case and that they had died exclusively from diseases. Fontem only had to send some people to Buea and he would learn that he was telling the truth. To this Fontem replied: “You will stay here, white man, and I’ll send my people to Buea to see if it’s true”. This is what he did. But Mr. C. also sent messengers to Buea, with a letter asking for help.

A few days later Fontem came with many grasslands people, armed with machetes and spears, and surrounded Conrau’s house. The latter thought that he was going to be killed and wanted to shoot Fontem from his hut. We advised him not to do so because things would then turn nasty and we did not know what would become of Conrau and ourselves. In the end nothing happened. Mr. C. and Fontem exchanged the usual pleasantries and then people were handed out their food.” (Vollbehr 1912, p. 50)

The following night Conrau attempted to escape without his interpreter. Lanschi heard the shots and hid in the bush with a companion. A few days later he was „(...) caught by Fontem’s men and taken to the chief’s courtyard. There lay the severed head and a hand of Mr Conrau, as well as two other heads of Bali people, who had also been employees of Mr C. Old Fontem said to me: “See, Lanschi, now I’ll probably have a lot of trouble with the Europeans, but I’m not to blame for his death. He took his own life.” (Vollbehr 1912, p. 51)

Then I heard the following from one of my fellow villagers, who had been there in the night when Mr C. tried to escape: “While on the run we were stopped by Fontem’s men and asked where the white man wanted to go in the night. Mr C.

heard this and thought that these people would take him back to Fontem by force (the village always bears the same name as its chief). Mr C. immediately shot at the people with his rifle. They fired back and wounded Mr C. in the right ankle, but so slightly that he could go on. He rested on a small hill, to which many of Fontem’s people followed him. Mr C. fired his remaining bullets at them. Finally, he fired his pistol, which had twelve bullets, and killed two people. With the last bullet he took his own life with a shot into the mouth.”

This led to a punitive expedition under Captain von Besser. „On February 8 1900 he started out from Duala to Mundame with Lieutenant v. Petersdorff-Campen and Buddeberg, assistant physician Dr. Dittmer, the NCOs Bentz and Schumann, 157 soldiers and a number of Bulu bearers.” (Strümpell 1921, p. 35) On March 1, Fontem was captured. The Bangwa were defeated, but not subjected. Vollbehr writes, „but it was not possible to remedy the situation long term because several Europeans were so badly injured that they died from their wounds or required prolonged medical care.” (Vollbehr 1912, p. 53) In the same year a military station was established at the Johann-Albrechtshöhe trading post, which had been in existence since 1895 and lay between Barombi and Bali, above Elephant Lake (Barombi Mbo). The commanding officer from October 13 1900 onwards was Kurt Strümpell (1872-1923). Asonganyi’s messenger sent word to him that he was ready to make peace on 17 October and on 12 November Strümpell travelled to Fontem. However, a year later, in early November 1901, fighting broke out again between Bangwa and Germans led by Lieutenant Colonel Curt von Pavel (1851-1933). Things were quiet in 1902, when Hans Heinrich Gerhard Houben (1871-19 ??) was commander in the Bangwa region for a few months. Final peace negotiations then followed on April 4, 1903 in Fontem with Captain William Langheld (1867-1917). Asonganyi did not take part because he was in hiding and he was declared deposed. Later, he spread the word through one of his sons that he had died<sup>13</sup>. A station was built in Fontem and the then Lieutenant Emil Rausch (1877-1914) was put in charge (Hoffmann 2007, p. 197). Eight years later, on 9 March 1911, Asonganyi turned himself in to Rausch in Fontem and was exiled to northern Cameroon (Dunstan 1965, p. 406).

German colonial rule gave way to the British Empire due to the 1st World War and after 1918 Asonganyi was restored to power, exercising it until his death in 1952. At the end of the 1950s a French doctor Pierre Harter was in the Bangwa region. Later, in his books, he paid tribute to Bangwa masks and statues for the first time. The first anthropologists active there, in 1967, were Robert Brain and Adam Pollock, who worked there for six months. Brain writes that the Bangwa region was an „isolated outpost of the British Empire“ until the independence of Cameroon in 1961.

**B. The Conrau-Luschan Collections and Correspondence in the Berlin Ethnological Museum**

In 1898 and 1899 the museum acquired three of Conrau’s collections. The museum’s acquisition records also contain the correspondence between Conrau and Luschan. The table below shows the file number, the date of the letter, the content type, the page number and where Conrau was at the time. Where a particular piece of writing was transcribed by Lintig (1994), the page number is specified.



There are 12 letters (7 from Conrau, 4 from Luschan, 1 from Conrau’s father), three collection lists and a bill of lading; a total of 16 documents. The correspondence between Conrau and Luschan begins on 7 April 1898 and ends on 1 October 1899. It probably follows a visit by Conrau to the Berlin Museum, since he announces - without a formal introduction – in a letter of 7 April sent from „Minden i. (N) W.(estphalia) „ that he has sent the first collection” and writes: „I have no other things which the museum does not already own“. At the latest by the beginning of May 1898 Conrau was in Berlin, as shown by the location from which the letter of 7 May was sent. On 3 August Conrau writes (again from Minden), that he will leave Hamburg on 10 August 1898 for Cameroon.

is clear that the „fetish suit“ consisted of three parts:

IIC9813

- „Fetisch suit atúka
  - a) Blue cotton shirt.
  - b) 90 cm mask (art kapuya) bedecked with beads
  - c) 70 cm diameter hat, decorated with beads“
- (see Transcription 2 below)

The third collection, acquired in November 1899, contains the Bangwa statues and a Banyang mask, a total of 71 items (numbers IIC10513 to 10583). Lintig mentions „71 Bangwa objects“ (Lintig 1994, p. 41). This figure is wrong, yet also cor-

File/Date	Contents	Page	Conrau in	Lintig Transcription
Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98				
7 April 1898	Conrau to Luschan	105	Minden	p. 158
	Collection directory Ia	106	---	---
14 April	Luschan to Conrau	107	Minden	p. 159
Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98				
5 May 1898	Luschan to Conrau	117	Berlin?	p. 160
	Collection directory Ib	118	---	---
7 May	Conrau to Luschan	119	Berlin	---
9 May	Luschan to Conrau	116	Berlin?	p. 161
3 August	Conrau to Luschan	120	Minden	p. 162
Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99				
18 February 1899	Conrau to Luschan	45+46	Cameroon	p. 163
18 February?	Collection directory II	47	Cameroon?	---
28 April	Luschan to Conrau	48	Cameroon	---
Acta Africa Vol. 21, E1015/99				
11 June 1899	Conrau to Luschan	48+49	Bangwa	p. 164 f.
3 September	Conrau to Luschan	50+51	Cameroon	p. 166
2+3 October	Woermann bill of lading	52+53	Victoria	---
1 October	Conrau to Luschan	54	Victoria	p. 167 f.
7 December	F. Conrau to Luschan	55	---	---

The objects in the first collection were made by the Balun (Balong), Barombi and Banyang peoples of the Cameroonian woodlands as well as the Bali and the Bagam from the grasslands; a total of 91 items (Ia: numbers IIC7693 to 7760, Ib: IIC7790 to 7813), including 26 statues and masks. There are two groups of acquisition numbers because the objects arrived at the museum in two separate transports. Information about the objects can be found in a directory provided by Conrau and a letter to Luschan dated 7 May 1898. The transcription of these documents is missing in Lintig (see Transcription 1 below). The second collection, acquired by the museum in April 1899, of works by the Balong, Bali and Bagam, comprises 13 items (numbers B-IIC9807 to 9819) and already includes the first two Bangwa objects, namely a dance costume bedecked with pearls together with a mask (IIC9813) and a tobacco pipe made of brass, its tube decorated with pearls (IIC9814).<sup>14</sup> Conrau acquired these pieces during his first visit to the Bangwa. „I managed to obtain a chief’s pipe and a fetish suit. (...) I have been given them by the chief, but of course I must give him a significant gift in return“<sup>15</sup> From the inventory book it

rect. In the Berlin inventory book it is mentioned with regard to number IIC10563 that this piece was collected by R.(obert) Visser<sup>16</sup> and number IIC10583 is a Banyang mask, as Conrau himself writes.<sup>17</sup> Thus there were 69 Bangwa objects in all. It was not until the two Bangwa objects from the second collection arrived that there were the 71 Bangwa objects that Conrau had delivered. 40 statues, 14 masks, a vessel decorated with a figure, and 16 objects such as pots, wattle, a bell, a tobacco pipe, a mask suit, a knife and a sword. An inventory of this collection has not yet been found, although the Bangwa descriptions of the statues, for example, clearly suggest that a relevant list existed. A comparison of the information from Conrau in the directories and his letters in the first two collections with the entries in the Berlin inventory book showed that the data had been transferred meticulously. This can therefore also be assumed regarding the third collection.

Brain’s remark that the masks and statues were sent to Germany and „its museums“ is misleading.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Lintig’s „Since so-called duplicates were given to other museums, it is conceivable that he collected and sent off further objects.“

(Lintig 1994, p. 41) Lintig does not provide specific information. Nor are there to date any objects in any German museum that could be associated with Conrau. What is known is that the masks and statues collected by Conrau in 1899 came to Berlin. Only the whereabouts of parts of the first collection (Ib) from 1898 - i.e. spears, pipe bowls, baskets, bags etc. – are unclear. This is because Luschan made a selection: „As you quite rightly assumed, most of the works would be duplicates for us (...) As soon as we have completed the acquisition of our chosen items, we’ll be very happy to assist you regarding an appropriate destination for the rest.“<sup>19</sup> To summarise, Conrau was a trader, elephant hunter, recruiter, researcher, adventurer and commission seeker, so to speak an independent contractor with a variable client base. He himself wrote in 1899 in a letter to Luschan: „Elephant hunting is my only source of income, which I use to finance everything.“ The commission to collect for the Berlin Ethnological Museum can also be clearly demonstrated in the next article. As LaGamma writes, he was certainly never a „colonial administrator“ (LaGamma 2011, p. 125). As Northern claims, he was at most temporarily a „colonial agent“ (Northern 1986, p. 20).

From 1890, at the latest, Conrau was travelling in the Cameroon hinterland and obviously got on very well with the local population. For more than eight years he actually experienced what many others only survived for a few weeks or months. The mortality rate among Europeans in Cameroon at that time was very high. He mostly travelled alone, accompanied by locals; there were rarely more than two or three Europeans with him. Under these circumstances, snobbery, brutality, arrogance, etc. were certainly not characteristics likely to enhance one’s chances of survival. But Conrau obviously enjoyed travelling in the wilderness. Berlin, imperial Germany and European civilisation were less attractive for him.

C. Background to Conraus Collecting



9. Felix von Luschan around 1907 (unknown photographer)

From the correspondence between Conrau and Luschan we can learn interesting details regarding Conrau’s whereabouts from 1898 to 1899, the purchase prices paid, the professional cooperation between Conrau and Luschan, and Luschan’s collection priorities. For the first part of the first collection (Ia) Conrau received 150 marks, i.e. the amount that he mentions in his letter of 7 April 1898, which Luschan accepted without negotiating.<sup>20</sup> (the monthly wage of a skilled mason was about 160 Marks in 1900). He seemed to be very interested in further Conrau collections, not only in the objects themselves, but also because the collection information was so accurate. „There are in fact a number of pieces amongst them that are very interesting for us (...) The exact list is, of course, also of great value to us.“<sup>21</sup> Luschan offered 300 marks

„of which half was to cover the cash expenses, the rest with a request to make purchases for us on the next trip.“<sup>22</sup> Regarding the second part of the first collection (Ib) Luschan wrote on May 5, after making a selection, „could you kindly write to us and let us know the price you want for the items referred to above?“<sup>23</sup> Conrau replied on 7 May: „I have allotted 110 Marks. This sum will be deducted from the 150 Marks which were given me last time“. In the letter there is a note dated 14 May 1898 which confirms the payment: „110 Marks paid for an oral arrangement“<sup>24</sup>, a collection acquisition so speedy that present day ethnological museums can only dream of it! On 9 May Luschan confirmed the payment of 110 marks and again insisted on giving an advance: „I would still ask you to consider the 150 marks that we sent you along with the last purchase price as available for the new journey.“<sup>25</sup> When Conrau, upon dispatching the second collection in March 1899, assumed that the advance amounted to 300 marks, Luschan promptly corrected this mistake. „With respect to our settlement, please allow me to remind you that you received not 300 but only 150 marks from us. Apart from the second collection, which we acquired from you directly for 110 marks, I can see from my letter to you of 14 April 1898 on the plans which we have in the files, that we paid 300 marks for an earlier collection. Of these 300 marks, 150 marks were to cover your cash expenses and 150 marks as an advance for acquisitions on the next trip.“<sup>26</sup>

Luschan writes regarding the purchase price for the second collection: „I would now like to suggest that we purchase your latest objects, minus the two pieces with beads, for the amount of the advance, i.e. for 150 marks, and that we make you a new advance in the sum of 300 marks.“<sup>27</sup> Even if the two ornamental pieces with beads were uninteresting for Luschan, he took the trouble to ensure this did not have a negative impact on Conrau’s finances. „As regards the two pieces with beads, I have to say that they are not really very important for us, but we ask you all the same to include them in the new bill for an amount which completely covers your costs. We are not able to accurately calculate the value of the two pieces ourselves and are afraid that we would underestimate their value. This we want to avoid at all costs and, in any case, we are very much obliged to you for your kind cooperation. We would be very sorry if you lost out due to an undervaluation of these two pieces.“<sup>28</sup> With regard to the third collection there was the following agreement: „For all goods delivered up till now, including the “dyelludyava” and the fetish mask embroidered with beads, along with the chief’s pipe, please send 1,300 marks to my father - Gamekeeper Conrau, Minden.“<sup>29</sup>

The purchase price for the collections was therefore as follows:

Collection I (a+b)	150 + 110 = 260 marks	plus an advance of 150 marks
Collection II	150 Mark	plus an advance of 300 marks
Collection III	300 + 1,000 =1,300 marks	

Twice advances were paid by Luschan, or rather by the Ethnology Museum. Therefore Conrau’s trips to the Bangwa can rightly be considered to be commissioned trips. Similarly, the

second and third collections can be considered to be commissioned collections. This is confirmed by the report from Bali near Vollbehr („to purchase curiosities“), already referred to by Conrau’s interpreter Lanschi. Clear indications of this commission relationship can also be seen in the collaboration between Luschan and Conrau.

Statues and masks were an important collecting priority for Luschan, always linked to questions as to their regional origin, their use and their local name. „We are very interested in the little statues from Kumba; we can never get enough of such beautiful old pieces. It is very important for us to know exactly what the individual statues signify.“<sup>30</sup> And in a letter of 14 April 1898: „Perhaps you could let me know the kind of celebration in which the two dance masks from Nyoke were used? Likewise for what purpose the human and ape skulls served in Mokonge? They both seem to have been smoked long ago.“<sup>31</sup> Luschan not only asked for more information on the objects he had received, but also tried to get Conrau to collect new object types that were familiar to him from other parts of Africa: „Don’t you come across any stone weapons at all from bygone ages in your area? In the Congo State they are not rare, and we recently received 786 pieces from Togo from Dr. Kersting, all of which he had obtained in a of couple villages, where they had been used as fear inspiring fetishes. Next time I will send you some printed material, which may interest you.“<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, no questions from Luschan as to the material employed, the production or the sculptor have (yet) been found.<sup>33</sup>

Conrau answered Luschan’s questions in his letters: „The large ivory horn in the museum with the lizards (from Dr. Zintgraff) comes from Bulu n’Guti in the Bafo region, 24 kilometers north of Kunde (Kiliwindi).“<sup>34</sup> And he corrected the collection information he had written himself: „Regarding the brass head of the pipe (elephant), I now have doubts as to whether it was really made by the Bangwa. (...) The beadwork was made by them. But in my opinion the brass head comes from Bagam.“<sup>35</sup> After his first visit to the Bangwa he asked Luschan in February 1899 whether the museum would be interested in purchasing additional pieces of a type (beadwork) already acquired. „The chief promised to make more things (chairs, etc.) for me than I can procure beads for. The latter can’t be found here in Cameroon. Couldn’t you get some for me? But they must be the same size as those on the objects sent. However, I do not know if you want more of these beaded objects.“<sup>36</sup> Luschan’s answer was clear. He was evidently uninterested in beadwork, but he did not give any reason for this. „We do not want any more beadwork pieces of this kind. Therefore, for the time being, I won’t get you any glass beads. I will only be able to get you some if you want beads like these for exchange purposes etc. If so, please give me a specific commission.“<sup>37</sup>

It was different with two masks from the Cross River region. „Two leather-covered heads from northern Bayang“<sup>38</sup> arrived in Berlin with the second collection. Luschan was really excited and wrote that he had „received the ethnographic material with very great pleasure. In particular, the two skin-covered heads are completely new to us and therefore of especial interest. There are two similar heads, though they are privately owned by the consul, Dr. Zimmermann. But I had thought up till now that they were fakes and did not give them their

due value. Now I will try to acquire the two heads for us and would be most grateful if you could seek to learn as much as possible about the symbolic meaning of such heads.“<sup>39</sup> It is instructive that, even then, Luschan could distinguish fakes, i.e. works made in Africa for Europeans. His concern was justified a few years later, when a large number of these pieces flowed into German museums.

Because Luschan was particularly interested in masks and statues („fetishes“), it is not surprising that Conrau wrote from Bangwa on 11 June 1899: „Here in Bangwe I have again collected a lot, particularly fetishes. Some are quite beautiful.“<sup>40</sup> And on 3 September 1899: „Generally they are fetishes from the Bangwe (probably more correct than Bangwa) region.“<sup>41</sup> It was not easy to acquire them because the „nice old pieces“ were rare, even then, and not traded publicly. Conrau wrote: „But what is on offer is not worth much. The Negroes keep the good things carefully hidden and you can only get them if you have their trust, secretly, by chatting with them as friends“<sup>42</sup> Trust was one thing. On the other hand, Conrau had to do a lot of travelling to acquire the pieces. „I purchased the other fetishes in all parts of the Bangwe region. After he had received very big presents, the chief allowed his people to sell these things. They are all old things that people no longer really appreciate today. The new fetishes, namely those from chief Fontem, are now mostly covered in beads.“<sup>43</sup> Without Asonganyi’s permission a purchase would not have been possible, even though he would not have wanted the sale to be made public. Therefore Conrau mentions regarding a leather-covered headgear mask: „Now you will also get a parcel with an iron bell, a mask and a large leather-covered double head, known as „dyelludyáva“. If you would like more of these covered heads, please let me know. I could probably get you a similar head. The Bangwe chief still has one, as far as I know, but he wants to sell it at a very expensive price. He gave me the „dyelludyava“ very secretly. He doesn’t want any of his fetish people to find out.“<sup>44</sup>

In the same letter Conrau mentions a „kind of iconoclasm“ in the Cameroon woodlands: „In the lowlands near Kambe there was once a kind of iconoclasm, which attempted to eradicate fetish power completely.“<sup>45</sup> Even Steiner, the missionary from Basel, wrote: „In Bakundulande fires blazed, into which the people threw their idols and associated things.“ (Steiner 1909, p.92) Obviously, a decisive change had taken place, which made it easier to acquire „old stuff“. New fetishes were considered to be more powerful. The beads were only an external feature. However, the old statues and masks were depleted further by two religious movements that infiltrated the Bangwa region from its borders - Islam from the north and Christianity from the coast. Long before the arrival of missionaries, given ideas and stories spread along the trade routes. In 1926 Vatter wrote on this subject: „Facing a wave of pro-Muslim sentiment, rolling in from the north amongst the Fulbe and Haussa tribes, Cameroonian sculpture retreated to the highlands and thereby preserved its individual character. But Islam is gradually growing stronger even here, especially among the chiefs, whom it is turning into enemies of the ancient pictorial art, with the result that they are progressively disappearing as potential clients, thereby eliminating the necessary conditions for this art. Its impending demise is also obviously being accelerated by the fact that for several years sculptors have been working for Europeans on commis-

sion.“ (Vatter 1926, p.166)

Conrau also suggested several times that the information collected on the pieces might not be correct. Luschan had given or sent Conrau a plate with pictures of Bafo and Kundu statues and Conrau tried to find out what the local names were. He writes: „regarding the statues on Plate XXV, which you gave me, I have found the following names for them. However, I cannot guarantee that these are correct.“<sup>46</sup> Conrau also expressed doubts as to whether the statues in the third collection could really be described as Bangwa: „I was told the names by the people. But I cannot vouch for their accuracy because my interpreter once noticed that a male name had been allotted to a female statue. However, the people claimed that this was the statue’s name. Because people do not like to speak openly about matters relating to fetishes, I believe that they intentionally make false statements“<sup>47</sup> Despite these uncertainties, Conrau thinks he can confirm: „this much is sure - that all these statues broadly serve as guardians. One has to watch out for thieves; another has to keep guard over the chief’s wives, etc. But above all, they are supposed to watch out for evil magicians who want to put spells on people. Of course, every illness is always attributed to sorcery. The statue is meant to expose the source of this sorcery.“<sup>48</sup>

Every now and then it is claimed in discussions that all or many museum objects were looted by military personnel. In the case of Besser’s punitive expedition that followed the death of Conrau, this can be ruled out. On 10 February 1900 Luschan wrote to the „Imperial Government of Cameroon“: „From photographs that the murdered Mr. G. Conrau sent here, it is clear that (...) Fontem, the Bangwe chief, has a very strange house on stilts, such as has up till now been totally unknown in West Africa (...) It is urgently required in the name of science that at least the pillars and horizontal beams which have been carved with statues should be obtained and sent to Berlin. (...) It is also very much to be desired that the chief’s large signal and dance drums, and whatever else in the way of carved „fetishes“ etc is to be found in his possession, not be destroyed but, rather, sent here“<sup>49</sup> The response from the head of the punitive expedition, Besser, was simply: „that when the village of Fontem was burned down, the chief’s house was also deliberately burned down, along with other signal drums, dance drums and fetishes, a small number of which were present and were mostly of little value. The expedition could not think about taking even the smallest rarity because no bearers whatsoever were available. Only with great difficulty could the most essential loads and the wounded be transported.“<sup>50</sup> In other studies of individual collections, therefore, the expeditions’ withdrawal conditions should be observed precisely, including the number of dead and wounded, of healthy bearers, and also possible reprisals against those retreating. Even where no transport of objects is mentioned in reports, these conditions can provide clues.

In summary, it can be said that Conrau’s trips to the Bangwa were made on the basis of Luschan’s commission – that is of the Berlin Ethnological Museum. The museum twice paid advances and the cooperation between Conrau and Luschan also clearly demonstrates this. The focus on statues and masks, especially for the third collection, was strongly influenced by Luschan’s collection interests. Brain/Pollock and Harter failed to recognize this because they were not familiar

with the correspondence between Conrau and Luschan, and although Lintig partially transcribed the letters, she did not analyze them in this way. What we know today about the pieces we owe partly to Luschan’s asking about their regional origin, their use and their local names. There are no answers regarding the materials used, how the objects were made or which artists carved them, since Luschan did not ask these questions.

From the letters we can sometimes deduce where Conrau was at the time. In his letter of 18 February 1899 Conrau reports on his first voyage, of the „return from the Bangwa region“. He was in Fontem from 11 to 15 December 1898, although he was on the road for a total of more than a month. The letter dated 11 June 1899 cites „Bangwa“ as the place it was sent from, and the letter of 1 October 1899 from „Victoria“. His second stay with the Bangwa cannot therefore have been before the end of February until the end of September 1899 at the earliest, and it was certainly his longest. Conrau’s third trip can therefore be dated no earlier than mid-October until his death in December 1899. The Bangwa statues were therefore all acquired, without exception, in 1899 during the second trip. This also tallies with the date of the third collection’s arrival in the Museum (Nov 1899), because after Conrau’s death in December 1899 no further objects arrived.

The acquisition from the Bangwa can only have been by consensus and was apparently supported by Asonganyi. Theft or the use of force would have been fatal for Conrau, since he was on the road without any military escort. The purchase was thus based on the trust that the seller had in Conrau, his travels „throughout the Bangwe region“ and his ability to offer appropriate goods in exchange. Nothing is mentioned, unfortunately, about these exchange goods. However, the acquisition was made possible because new „fashions“ (decoration with beads) made the old „fetishes“ appear less valuable in the eyes of the sellers.

In conclusion, a lot of information about Conrau in the US literature is incorrect. In 1984 Northern published a short text on the „Bangwa Queen“ and reported the following about the collector (passages of incorrect information are in **red**, vague or inaccurate ones in **green**): „It was collected by Gustav Conrau, **a merchant-explorer and colonial agent** in the Bangwa region **1897-1898**. He was the first white man who reached the Bangwa kingdoms **in 1897**. His main **mission** was to **recruit workers** in the grasslands for German plantations on the coast. He **collected** intensively **during two stays** in the Bangwa region. **His longest stay was as a prisoner in Fontem**. This statue may come from Fontem, but Conrau’s collecting in smaller kingdoms around Fontem means this is uncertain. Conrau **died** an unnatural death **in early 1899, possibly suicide**.“<sup>51</sup> (Northern 1984, p. 20)

Although in 1994 Lintig published significantly more accurate data and the greater part of the correspondence between Conrau and Luschan, the following LaGamma text was included in 2011 in the German catalog of the Rietberg Museum in Zurich for the exhibition „Heroes of Africa“: „**The most important and largest Bangwa art centre was Fontem. This is where the first statues from this region to enter German museums come from**“ (LaGamma 2011, p. 123). With regard to the Bangwa Queen LaGamma writes: „The German **colonial**



official Gustav Conrau purchased this wonderful sculpture in 1897 or 1898 in the Bangwa region and identified it as the image of a priestess (njuindem“ (LaGamma 2011, p. 125).

There are rather a lot of coloured passages. The fact that an American woman cannot read German sources is more or less acceptable; that a world-class German-language museum publishes such errors is not. If the verifiable data in such well-known, important collections (and exhibitions) are so persistently wrong, although several ethnologists and art historians have published on Conrau (and much that Lintig writes is correct), how mistake-ridden and inaccurate is the analysis likely to be regarding less important collections? In other words, how scientifically accurate and reliable are exhibition catalogs?

Another mistake LaGamma made, that she identified Conrau’s „Bangwa Queen“ as „the picture of a priestess (njuindem)“, was based on an incorrect quote in Brain/Pollock: „Conrau reported that the Bangwa called her njuindem ...“<sup>52</sup> Neither in the Berlin inventory book, nor in the files is this description to be found concerning the former number IIIC10529 („Bangwa Queen“). In the inventory book Conrau refers to this statue „mānyon“, as also pointed out by Lintig (Lintig



10. Female Bangwa statue in Sydow 1927, previously in Berlin as IIIC10529, now in Musée Dapper, Paris (DP 8073).

**The correct information, in brief:**

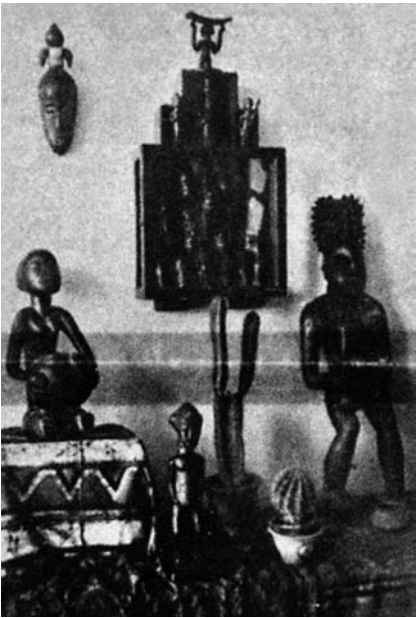
- \* Conrau’s **first** Bangwa visit to Fontem 11-15 December **1898**.
- \* Conrau’s **second** stay – at the earliest end of February to September **1899**.
- \* **Third** stay - at the earliest from mid-October to mid-December **1899**.
- \* Acquisition of the first Bangwa objects (mask suit, tobacco pipe) by Conrau during his first stay in **1898**.
- \* All statues were collected during the second stay in **1899** „throughout the Bangwe region“, not only in the vicinity of Fontem.
- \* Conrau was **self-employed** and only intermittently an employee. His activities included: recruiter, collector on commission, elephant hunter, researcher, businessman.
- \* Conrau collected for the Berlin Ethnology Museum in the Bangwa region **on behalf** of Luschan.
- \* Conrau’s death in Fontem approx. mid December **1899** as a result of a conflict and by his own hand.

1994, p. 172). In the case of a female statue with a child in her arms (IIIC10531) Conrau refers just once to a Bangwa designation „nyuindem“. Therefore Brain/Pollock has not properly researched this matter but, rather, simply followed a mantra which had been repeated for 40 years in articles, exhibition catalogs, exhibition texts, auction catalogs, etc. regarding this statue. „The names ngwindem (or njuindem) and Anyi were used interchangeably. A ngwindem among the Bangwa of today prophesies with Kauri snail shells or in a trance state. While she eats, sings the song of the earth, and dances to it, she carries – like this carved statue - a rattle in her right hand, and in her left hand a bamboo trumpet, as employed to call upon the gods. Therefore this statue of a dancing woman is an image of a mother of twins in the role of an earth priestess and witch finder.“<sup>53</sup>

Has no one ever asked why the Dancing Queen holds her rattle the wrong way round, in fact the way you would hold a gourd? Of course, Brain/Pollock’s interpretation could still be correct, but there is no reason to repeat it as if it were a proven fact.

On the subject of collecting in the colonial era we can say with certainty that generalizing theories will only be possible once a large number of collections have been evaluated - as this study attempts to do. The accusation that „everything has been stolen“ can currently be described as ideological agitation, because it is not based on a statistical analysis of collection items, but on a few individual cases, which are not even usually discussed in proper historical depth or with scientific objectivity.

The collecting strategy of the then Berlin Ethnological Museum was ethnographic and was aimed at the entirety of the respective sculptural culture. The large number of statues and masks („fetishes“) in Conrau’s collections shows, however, how important the aesthetic component was to Luschan. Debates about quality were already taking place (forgery, use of beads). The claim that the Cubists (Braque, Picasso) and



11a+b Male Bangwa statue, previously Berlin IIIC10518 which, in 1925, was at the trade fair “Youth, Games, Sport” in Berlin and in 1926 in an advertisement in “Kunst-Spiegel” for the exhibition “Exotic objects and cacti” at the Neumann & Nierendorf Gallery.

Fauves (Derain, Matisse, Vlaminck) discovered African art in the early years of the new century was an oversimplification of the facts. Doctors who were enthusiastic about ethnology, such as Augustin Krämer, Adolf Bastian, Felix von Luschan, Richard Karutz, the geographer Richard Andree or the autodidact and Africa researcher Leo Frobenius, had written significantly on the „art of primitive peoples“ since about 1890 and are the true discoverers.<sup>54</sup> But this message from the ethnological specialists to the mainstream public went unheard. The artists were necessary as go-betweens so that the interest of those in the middle of society could be awoken. However, where would recognition of African sculpture be today if these artists had not become famous?

**Transcription 1**

**Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-106 Verzeichnis Sammlung Ia von Conrau**  
„Ethnographische Gegenstände aus dem Kamerungebiete (Schreibweise nach dem Standard Alph.)“  
Anmerkung Autor: Die einheimischen Namen sind mit linguistischen Sonderzeichen geschrieben, diese fehlen unten.

**I. Balun** (am mittleren Mungo)  
1) 1 großer Götze aus Mokonye (rechte Mungoseite)  
2) 1 Kappe mit Papageienfedern verziert aus Mokonye, beim Tanz gebraucht  
3) 1 Pfeifenkopf aus einem Fetischhaus in Mokonye (wahrscheinlich aus dem Innern stammend)  
4) 1 Menschenschädel aus Mokonye  
5) 1 Schimpansenschädel dto.  
6) 2 Tanzmasken aus Ngoke am Bome (linke Mungoseite)  
7) 18 kleine Fetische aus Ngoke (einige aus Mokonye)  
8) 2 Fetschelfenbeinfiguren aus Ngoke

**II. Barombi** (zwischen die Balun eingeschoben)  
9) 1 großer Götze aus Barombi ba Kasi (in der Nähe von Mokonye)

**III. Bangan** (am Oberlauf des Calabar (Crossriver))  
10) 1 Jagdtasche aus Antilopenfell  
IV. Babeson SW von Bali  
11) 1 Frauengürtel

**V Bali** (Banyou)

12) 1 Korb kekat  
13) 9 Pfeifenköpfe tsintiba Tabakpfeife  
14) 5 Pfeifenrohre tsintiba  
15) 1 Balidolch savua  
16) 6 Kappen dzotu  
17) 8 Umhangtaschen mpo  
18) 3 kl. Thontöpfe? tu  
**VI. Babadsu** SO v. Bali  
19) 1 Schwert

**VII. Bagam** in 1 Tagesreise O von Bali in der Nähe der F? Nun (zum Wohngebiete der Mbam gehend)  
20) 1 Schwert in messingverzierter Scheide  
21) 3 messingene Armringe“  
Author’s note: Pieces 1-21) were inventoried under the numbers IIIC07693 to 7760.

**Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-118: Angebotsverzeichnis Sammlung Ib von Luschan**  
„Herr G. Conrau in Minden bietet zum Kauf an:  
38 Pfeifenköpfe Bali  
2 Körbe Bali  
4 Taschen Bali  
1 Glocke  
1 Pfeifenrohr Bali  
3 Schwerter m. Scheide  
7 Messer m. Scheide  
3 Flöten  
15 Mützen  
1 Peitsche  
1 Messingarmring  
1 Elfenbeinhorn  
1 Messer  
2 Speerspitzen  
18 Speere  
2 kl. Elefantenzähne  
1 Karton m. Käfern  
Von diesen Stücken sind zu erwerben sehr wünschenswert:  
1) 18 Pfeifenköpfe  
2) 1 Tasche  
3) 1 Elfenbeinhorn  
4) 1 Armring  
5) 1 Messer  
6) 1 Schwert  
7) 1 Speer  
Author’s note: Pieces 1-7) were inventoried under the numbers



IIIC7790-7813.

**Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-119: Brief Conrau an Luschan, 7. Mai 1898**  
„Berlin d. 7. V. 98  
Sehr geehrter Herr Professor,  
Ihr geehrtes Schreiben kam heute morgen in meine Hände.  
Die Pfeifenköpfe, die Tasche und das Schwert stammen aus Bali.  
Der Armring ist ebenfalls von den Bali erworben, soll aber von Bagam stammen. Das Elfenbeinhorn stammt von den Balung, ebenso das Messer. Letzteres ist aus Mokonye. Die Fetischfigur mit dem Beil stammt aus Ngoke (Balung), die Speere sind alle von Bali erworben. Ich habe M 110 ausgelegt. Diese Summe würde von den M 150, welche mir das letzte Mal zur Verfügung gestellt wurden, abziehen sein.  
Hochachtungsvoll ganz ergebenst  
G Conrau“  
„110 M auf mündliche Anordnung gezahlt, Eling(?) 14/5.98“

Transkription 2

The transcriptions of the following two texts are also missing in Lintig.

**Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-47: Verzeichnis Sammlung II**  
„Kiste 1  
„1 Fetischanzug aus Bangwa (Hemd Maske, Hut) atú ka (1 Stück Gewebe. Auf letzterer sind die Perlen gestickt.  
1 Mess. Tabakspfeife mit Perlen besticktem Rohre Bangwa lé kun tábo  
sie gehört dem Ober Häuptling Fontem  
3 kl. Fetische aus Kumba am Elefantensee (Ko Mapín Fetischverbindung Mali) Bafó  
2 mit Leder bezogene Köpfe aus dem N Banyang Lande tingo genannt. Wurden bei Tänzen benutzt.  
„Kiste 2  
1 Fetischfigur aus Bakundu ?? Nandu motúnde  
2 Tanzmasken aus Bamufét (Bafut) bei Buni“  
Author’s note: Unfortunately, the special linguistic characters in the Bangwa names cannot be reproduced here.

**Transkription**  
**Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99 - 48: Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899**  
„Hochgeehrter Herr Conrau,  
mit bestem Danke für Ihren Brief vom 18.2. bestätige ich Ihnen zunächst den sicheren Eingang der darin erwähnten 2 Kisten. Was daraus für das zoolog. und das botan. Museum bestimmt war, haben wir bereits abgegeben, das ethnographische Material aber mit sehr großer Freude zur Kenntnis genommen; besonders die zwei mit Haut überzogenen Köpfe sind für uns völlig neu und daher besonders interessant gewesen. Es befinden sich zwei ähnliche Köpfe, allerdings hier im Privatbesitz des Consuls Dr. Zimmermann, aber ich hielt sie bisher für unecht und habe sie nicht genügend gewürdigt; ich werde jetzt trachten, die beiden Köpfe auch für uns zu erwerben, würde Ihnen aber serh verbunden sein, wenn Sie inzwischen trachten würden, möglichst viel über die Bedeutunt derartiger Köpfe zu erfahren.  
Was unsere Abrechnung angeht, so bitte ich feststellen zu dürfen, dass Sie nicht 300 sondern nur 150 M. Vorschuss von uns hatten. Abgesehen von der zweiten Sammlung, die wir direct um 110 M. von Ihnen erwarben, sehe ich aus meinem Schreiben an Sie vom 14. 4. 98, dessen Concept wir bei den Acten haben, dass wir Ihnen für eine frühere Sammlung 300 M. bezahlt haben, davon 150 M als Betrag für Ihre baren Auslagen und 150 M als Vorschuss für Erwerbungen auf der nächsten Reise.  
Ich möchte Ihnen nun vorschlagen, dass wir Ihre neue Einsendung, ohne die beiden Stücke mit Perlen, für den Betrag des Vorschusses, also für 150 M. übernehmen, und dass wir Ihnen einen neuen Vorschuss im Betrage von 300 Mark überweisen. Ich bitte Sie dann nur um eine gef. Mittheilung an welche Ad-

resse Sie diese 300 M. gezahlt haben wollen.  
Was die beiden Stücke mit Perlen angeht, so muss ich allerdings sagen, dass sie für uns keinen sehr grossen Wert haben, aber wir bitten Sie doch, sie uns mit irgend einem Betrage in die neue Rechnung zu stellen, der Ihre Kosten völlig deckt. Wir sind nicht in der Lage, die zwei Stücke selbst genau zu schätzen und fürchten, dann wir sie zu gering schätzen möchten, was wir um jeden Preis vermeiden wollen und wir sind Ihnen ja für Ihre gütige Mitarbeit ohnehin zum allergrössten Danke verpflichtet und wir würden es sehr bedauern, wenn Sie durch eine ungenügende Schätzung dieser beiden Stücke zu kurz kommen würden.  
Weitere Perlenstickereien dieser Art würden für uns nicht erwünscht sein; ich besorge Ihnen daher einstweilen keine Glasperlen, nur wenn Sie etwa solche Perlen für Tauschzwecke u.s.w. wünschen wollten, würde ich Ihnen welche besorgen können: ich bitte dann noch um einen besonderen Auftrag.  
Sehr interessant sind uns die kleinen Figuren aus Kumba; von solchen schönen alten Stücken können wir niemals genug bekommen. Es wäre uns sehr wichtig, genau zu erfahren, was die einzelnen Figuren bedeuten.  
Von Ihrer Mittheilung Schädel und Photographien betreffend, nehmen wir dankbarst Notiz.  
Kommen denn in Ihrer Gegend gar keine Steinwaffen aus alter Zeit vor? Im Congo-Staat sind sie nicht selten und aus Togo erhielten wir kürzlich von Dr. Kersting 786 Stück, die er alle in ein Paar Dörlern bekommen hatte, wo sie als Fetische verwahrt und gefürchtet gewesen waren.  
Nächstens sende ich Ihnen einige Drucksachen, die Sie vielleicht interessieren.  
Mit besten Grüssen und aufrichtigen Wünschen für Ihre Gesundheit und Ihr Wohlergehen  
hochachtungsvoll ergebenst v. Luschan“

Text: Andreas Schlothauer  
Translation: Tom Hawes

NOTES

- Mansfeld 1928, Tafel 143, Figur 182, 183
- Die Zahl ist bei Harter genannt. „Ils comptent environ 30.000 individus répartis en 9 chefferies et sous-chefferies satellites.“ (Harter 1993, S. 300)
- „Les Bangwa sont les peuples les plus occidentaux du Grasland camerounais; ils s’installent il y a moins de deux siècles dans une région montagneuse, limité au sud par la plaine forestiere des Mbo, à l’ouest par la forêt des Banyang et les sources de la Cross River, au nord par les Mundani et les montagnes de Bamen-da, enfin à l’est par les plateaux volcaniques de Bamiléké.“ (Harter 1993, S. 300)
- Schreibweise wie bei www.lebialem.info. Lintig und Brain schreiben Assunganyi.
- Die Zeitangabe „Februar 1898“ bei Brain ist falsch. „The Bangwa saw their first German in February 1898 when Gustav Conrau, ... arrived ...“ (Brain 1967, S. 7) Falsch auch die genannte Jahreszahl „1897“ bei Brain (Brain 1971, S. 1). Richtig ist der 11. bis 15. Dezember 1898, wie einem Aufsatz Conraus zu entnehmen ist (Conrau 1899, S. 201-210). So auch bei Lintig 1994, S. 34.
- In einem Brief vom 18. Februar 1899 schreibt Conrau an Luschan: „Die Elefantenjagd ist ja meine einzige Einnahmequelle, mit der ich alles bestreite.“ (Acta Africa Vol. 20 E337/99-45). Die Briefe sind teilweise bei Lintig transkribiert (Lintig 1994, S. 158 ff.). Ich habe 2009 die Erwerbsakten fotografiert und vergleichend ausgewertet.
- Acta Africa Vol. 20 E337/99-45, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 18. Februar 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-48, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 11. Juni 1899, nennt „Bangwa“ als Absendeort.
- Acta Africa E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Aus dieser etwas unglücklichen Formulierung von Strümpell lässt sich als Todesmonat Conraus nicht der Oktober schliessen; es war Dezember 1899 (siehe auch Listig 1994, S. 43 f.).
- G.N.K. heisst Gesellschaft Nordwest-Kamerun. Zum Tode Conraus auch die mündliche Überlieferung der Bangwa (von Dunstan aufgezeichnet), welche die Sicht von Asonganyi auf die Hintergründe des Konfliktes vermittelt (Dunstan 1965, S. 406). Außerdem die Zusammenfassung bei Hoffmann 2007, S. 193 f.
- „18. Erzählung eines schwarzen Dolmetschers Lanschi aus Bali, seit 1902 im Dienst der Station Dschang.“ (Vollbeh 1912, S. 50).
- Vollbeh 1912, S. 53 f.; Zimmermann 1909, S. 164 ff; Langheld 1938, S.146 ff.; Hoffmann 2007, S. 192 ff.; Strümpell 1921, S. 35 ff.
- Im Berliner Inventarbuch steht: „Iekun Tabakpfeife, Kopf aus Messing, Rohr aus Holz, mit Perlstickerei überzogen und mit Glockengehänge, 58,5 cm“.
- Acta Africa Vol. 20 E337/99-45, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 18. Februar 1899. Außerdem beschreibt Conrau die Stücke in seinem Reisebericht (Conrau 1899, S. 205, 207).

- „Kurzer Stab an einem Ende ein Tierkopf (Pantherl), Pflock zum Befestigen der Hängematte, 30,8 cm lang.“ Und: „Dieses Stück ist aus Versehen hier inventarisiert; es gehört zu 79/98 R. Visser IIIC10735-10780.“
- „tingo. Kopf aus Holz mit Haut überzogen, 31,5 cm h Banyang.“
- „He later acquired (...) a collection of masks and statues which were sent (...) to Germany and its museums.“ (Brain 1971, S. 1).
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-117, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 5. Mai 1898
- „Ich habe für dieselbe M 150 ausgelegt.“ Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-105, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 7. April 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-107, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 14. April 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-107, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 14. April 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-117, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 5. Mai 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-119, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 7. Mai 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E493/98-116, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 9. Mai 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21, E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-107, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 14. April 1898
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Die Künstler und Schnitzer wurden spätestens ab den 1920er Jahren vorgestellt, z. B. bei Emonts 1922, S. 168 ff.
- Acta Africa Vol. 19, E398/98-105, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 7. April 1898
- Anmerkung Autor: Ikiliwindi oder Kiliwindi war eine Ortschaft der Kundu im Waldland Kameruns. Bulo N’guti war ein Dorf der Kundu und nicht der Bafo (Esser 1898, S. 112).
- Acta Africa Vol. 21, E1015/99-48, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 11. Juni 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-45, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 18. Februar 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 18. Februar 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 20, E337/99-48, Brief Luschan an Conrau, 28. April 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-48, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 11. Juni 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-50, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 3. September 1899  
Die Schreibweise „Bangwe“ ist dann zwar im Berliner Inventarbuch übernommen, hat sich aber nicht durchgesetzt.
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-49, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 11. Juni 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21, E1015/99-48, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 11. Juni 1899  
„Fig. 8 Tafel XXV heißt ‚efunde diu‘. Der Name für Gott ist abase bei den Bafu. (...) Von den Figuren auf Tafel XXV, welche Sie mir mitgaben, habe ich folgende Namen erkundet, für deren Richtigkeit ich allerdings meinen Kopf nicht verpfände (Bak=Bakundu, Baf=Bafu). No 5 dubi Bak, 6) mamafio Baf Bak 13) mamasurigo (Schweinegott nicht No. 6) Baf, 8) efunde dio Baf, 15) minamotene Baf, 12) sungurro (nur von einem Großen der Verbindung geführt, 9) itumbadi Baf, 17) mbambu Baf, 1) elolefou (wird vor das Haus eines Diebes, Ehebrechers etc. gestellt, der muß dann bezahlen), 2) temafe Baf (wird von einem Mann getragen, dessen Weib Zwillinge geboren hat, damit jeder es weiß.“  
In Frage kommt nur eine Tafel XXV mit Figuren des Kameruner Waldlandes „Bakundu“ in Luschan 1897.
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 21 E1015/99-54, Brief Conrau an Luschan, 1. Oktober 1899
- Acta Africa Vol. 22, Brief Luschan in Lintig 1994, S. 169
- Brief von Besser in Lintig 1994, S. 170
- „It was collected among the Bangwa between 1897 and 1898 by Gustav Conrau, who was a merchant-explorer and colonial agent and was the first white man to reach the Bangwa kingdoms in 1897. His primary mission was to recruit Grass-fields men to German plantation labor at the coast. He also collected extensively en route during two sojourns among the Bangwa. His longest stay as a captive was in Fontem. It seems probable that this sculpture originated in Fontem, but Conrau’s collecting activities in the smaller kingdoms around Fontem make this less than a certainty. Conrau died in Fontem in early 1899 under duress and probably by his own hand.“ (Northern 1984, S. 20)

52+53 „Conrau records that the Bangwa called her njuindem, which literally means ‚woman of God‘ and refers to the role of certain gifted mothers of twins as diviners. The titles ngwindem (or njuindem) and anyi are used interchangeably. One ngwindem in Bangwa today divines with cowrie shells or while in a state of trance. While singing and dancing ase (the song of the earth) she carries, like the carved figure, a rattle in her right hand; in her left she carries a bamboo trumpet of the kind used for calling gods. This statue of a dancing woman, then, portrays a mother of twins in her role as priestess of the earth and witch-finder.“ (Brain/ Pollock 1971, S. 124)

54 Siehe auch Vatter 1926, S. 7 ff.

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