

Africa display – 1. African Encounters captions

1. 204/1975 bifacial tool
2. 45/2003/6 handaxe
3. 40/2006 ground stone axe head
4. 511/2005/4, 8, 9 projectile points
5. 66/1938/3a figure of horse and rider
6. 17/2017/1 handle
7. 17/2017/2 sherd
8. 17/2017/3 sherd
9. 17/2017/4 body sherd
10. 17/2017/5 body sherd
11. 17/2017/6 body sherd
12. 72/1953 stone carving
13. Various ostrich egg and shell beads
14. Not accessioned carved elephant tusk
15. 601/2005/3 copper blister
16. 90/1951/11/2 and 10/4 gold dust box and spoon
17. 27/2001/6 rubber latex slab
18. E603 necklace of oil palm kernel discs
19. Geol1318 and 884/1913 diamonds
20. 90/1951/10/1 brass scales
21. 68/1994/11, 41, 53, 57, 60, 61 assorted gold-weights
22. E598 locally smelted bell
23. 90/1951/2 figure
24. E1426 chief's sceptre
25. 116/1999 protective amulet
26. 88/1927/5 carved stool
27. 80/2001/1 clay figure of lion
28. 9/1889/64 power figure
29. E1395 figure
30. 88/1928/1 figure
31. 9/1889/70 clay pipe
32. 88/1928/21a ornamental paddle
33. 9/1889/73 tobacco ball
34. 122/1993/5 copper manilla
35. E669 spear
36. 72/2008/61 woven hat
37. 72/2008/76 saddle bag
38. 94/1993/7 iron shackles
39. 88/1928/47 iron shackles
40. 72/2008/107 acacia pod
41. 72/2008/3 shell money necklace
42. 72/2008/132 powder horn
43. 72/2008/144 horse bit
44. 124/2000/3 figure
45. E597 cartridge belt
46. 434/2005/39/2 woven basket

- 47. 60/1948/93 prayer beads
- 48. E583/1 ceremonial drum
- 49. 202/1915 commemorative head
- 50. 601/2005/1/1 register
- 51. 434/2005/41 passport
- 52. E1938 magistrate's certificate
- 53. 16/2013 man's tunic
- 54. 42/2019 barkcloth purse
- 55. 114/2004/6 airline travel bag

1. 204/1975

Bifacial tool

150,000 years old

South Africa

Initially struck from a core and worked on both sides.

2. 45/2003/6

Handaxe

1 million years old

South Africa

Crafted from quartzite rock in the Lower Paleolithic.

3. 40/2006

Ground stone axe head

4000 years old

Nigeria

Found in 1912 during a railway and road survey.

4. 511/2005/4, 8, 9

Projectile points

4000 years old

Niger

Jasper and chert arrowheads picked up on the surface of the desert sand.

5. 66/1938/3a

Figure of horse and rider

Date unknown

Lower Niger River, Nigeria

Early copper alloy working in the Lower Niger region dates to the 9th to 10th centuries CE. Copper, lead and tin were available locally, and the technology for the smelting and casting in bronze was also known.

6. 17/2017/1

Handle

4 - 500 years old

Azelik, Niger

Handle from a large red clay vessel.

7. 17/2017/2

Sherd

Late Iron Age

Rakai district, Uganda

Rim sherd with prominent roulette pattern decoration.

8. 17/2017/3

Sherd

About 1000 years old

Tong Hills, Ghana

From an excavation in the Nyoo shrine in 2006.

9. 17/2017/4

Body sherd

Around 1100 years old

Gao Ancien, Mali

Black burnished comb impressed with geometric decoration.

10. 17/2017/5

Body sherd

Around 2500 years old

Meroitic, Sudan

Fine sherd with ridged decoration and painted geometric design. Surface find in the vicinity of Khartoum in 1991.

11. 17/2017/6

Body sherd

Around 1400 years old

Gao Ancien, Mali

Red-slipped burnished sherd with hand-painted decoration.

12. 72/1953

Stone carving (*nomoli* or 'found spirit')

3 – 500 years old

Sapi, Guinea

This likely represented a chief or a king. Found in rice fields and palm groves, they become the focus of shrines and blessings for abundant harvests. They are regarded as ancestors who once lived upon the land.

13. Various

Ostrich egg and shell beads

20th century

East Africa

For thousands of years, the thick ostrich eggshell has provided one of the oldest materials for body adornment – beads.

14. Not accessioned

Carved elephant tusk

Early-20th century

Nigeria

Historically, elephant ivory was a valued material. As a result the world appetite for ivory, especially from the early 1900s, decimated elephant herds. Despite attempts to end the trade in 1989, tens of thousands of elephants are killed annually to meet the demand of modern consumers.

15. 601/2005/3

Copper blister

Produced 1960s

Nkana mine, Kitwe district, Zambia

Since 1932, Nkana has produced about 6 million tons of copper and it is one of the global producers of copper. Zambia also mines lead, iron-ore, silver, gold and precious stones.

16. 90/1951/11/2 and 10/4

Gold dust box (*adaka*) and spoon (*nsawa*)

Late-19th century

Akan, Ghana

Vessels used in the gold dust trade. 8th century Arab sources tell us that powerful kingdoms and empires in West Africa traded precious cargo, such as gold, salt, ivory and people, along trans-Saharan trade routes.

17. 27/2001/6

Rubber latex slab

Late-19th century

Provenance unknown

Western inventions in the late-19th century led to a worldwide demand for rubber. Rubber was acquired from West and Central Africa by the colonial powers through free trade, and through the brutal practices of the concession companies in the Belgian-controlled Congo Free State.

18. E603

Necklace of oil palm kernel discs

19th century

Yoruba (Egba), Abeokuta, SW Nigeria

The oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) is native to West Africa. British demand for it in the 19th century led to Nigeria being the largest exporter until 1934 when operations switched to Malaysia.

19. Geol1318 and 884/1913

Diamonds

Excavated in 1877

Kimberley, South Africa

The De Beers company was created by Cecil Rhodes in 1880. He had purchased several diamond fields, including the mine at Kimberley. Until the 1990s, De Beers had a monopoly over the diamond trade.

20. 90/1951/10/1

Brass scales (*mframansa*)

Late 19th century

Akan, Ghana

A delicate balance scale used to weigh gold dust, which was a currency on the Gold Coast until 1900.

21. 68/1994/11, 41, 53, 57, 60, 61

Assorted gold-weights (*mrammuo*)

Late-19th century

Akan, Ghana

(Top to bottom) – machined brass screw, money cowrie, Chinese porcelain, lithic. (Bottom left) – unidentified animal hoof. (Bottom right) - keyhole cover.

22. E598

Locally smelted bell (*aja*)

Made before 1868

Yoruba, Abeokuta, SW Nigeria

The bell of Ọbatálá, the creator of the human form. Divinities and ancestors create social order and give humans a place in the universe.

23. 90/1951/2

Figure (*akua'ba*)

Early-20th century

Akan (Asante), southern Ghana

Carved for a woman who desired children. The form of the head embodies the ideal of Akan beauty.

24. E1426

Chief's sceptre (*mvwala*)

Collected before 1874

Kongo peoples, Loango coastal region of Central Africa

The chief's sceptre was an instrument of memory, communication and mediation. The Roman Catholic Church had much influence on the Kongo nobility during the early contact period.

25. 116/1999

Protective amulet

Made before 1905

Possibly Mandingo, Sierra Leone

Worn by a Muslim man, the amulet contains passages from the Qu'ran. Collected by the Rev. P.J.J. Fear, chaplain to the Bishop of Sierra Leone 1900 – 1905.

26. 88/1927/5

Carved stool

Acquired by F.P. Pinkett 1895 - 1911

Yoruba, SW Nigeria

This stool probably formed part of the ritual paraphernalia of an altar house dedicated to Šango (Shango), the Yoruba orisha of thunder and lightning.

27. 80/2001/1

Lion of Judah

Acquired 1968

Beta Israel, Gondar, Ethiopia

From 1980, 45,000 members of the Beta Israel population departed from Ethiopia for Israel under the 'Law of Return', in order to escape the poor conditions brought on by drought and famine.

28. 9/1889/64

Figure (*nkisi*)

Made before 1889

Kongo peoples, Loango coastal region of Central Africa

A partly deconsecrated power figure associated with funerary memorial figures. It depicts a departed ancestor as a thoughtful person whose first concern was the welfare of his people.

29. E1395

Figure

Donated 1868

Kongo peoples, Lower Congo River, Central Africa

Loosely resembling a power figure, this carving panders to racial stereotypes. It was likely produced for sale in response to the European demand for curios.

30. 88/1928/1

Figure

Acquired by F.P. Pinkett 1895 - 1911

Yoruba, Porto Novo, SW Nigeria

This carving portrays a Muslim man with prayer beads. Likely intended for sale to Europeans, Lagos was a major centre for trade and smuggling activities.

31. 9/1889/70

Ceramic pipe head

Made before 1889

Kongo peoples, Loango coastal region of Central Africa

With a European face, this pipe head embodies the cultural and economic interaction between the Kongo and European traders.

32. 88/1928/21a

Ornamental paddle

Made before 1928

Itsekiri, Niger Delta, SE Nigeria

In addition to elaborate ornamental combs, Itsekiri carvers carved these paddles for sale. The openwork designs render them useless as boat paddles.

33. 9/1889/73

Tobacco ball

Donated 1889

Kongo peoples, Loango coastal region of Central Africa

Tobacco was introduced to Africa by the Portuguese who brought it from Brazilian plantations.

34. 122/1993/5

Copper manilla (*okpoho*)

Legal tender until 1911

England

Copper ('red gold') manillas were exported to Nigeria for use as a means of exchange. By 1948, 32 million manillas were recalled and replaced by a coin currency.

35. E669

Spear

Made circa 1879

Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

British-made farming tools were exported to Africa and some were recycled into spears. Two spearheads in the collection carry Sheffield stamps.

36. 72/2008/61

Woven hat

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Mandingo, West Africa

Worn by Mandingo men who were often involved in slave raiding and slave trading. It was likely obtained during anti-slavery operations.

37. 72/2008/76

Saddle bag

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Mandingo, West Africa

The Mandingo trade in slaves began long before the European colonial era. It was a significant part of the trans-Saharan caravan trade between West Africa and the Middle East.

38. 94/1993/7

Iron shackles

Acquired by J. Stephens circa 1910

Nigeria

Shackles for a slave's wrists. Collected as evidence during anti-slavery operations.

39. 88/1928/47

Iron shackles

Acquired by F.P. Pinkett 1895 - 1911

Northern Nigeria

Slave shackles of a type once used widely by Muslim slave owners. This would have been locked around a person's neck.

40. 72/2008/107

Acacia pod

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Possibly from a captured ship, West Africa

The acacia pod (*Cassia fistula*) was considered a medicine by mariners. It was used as a laxative.

41. 72/2008/3

Shell money necklace (*chibo*)

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Bubi, Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea

Achatina shells once acted as currency. Bubi women were observed wearing large necklaces of shell money. One large shell necklace was worth 12 gallons of palm oil.

42. 72/2008/132

Powder horn

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Mandingo, West Africa

A leather-covered horn container for gun powder.

43. 72/2008/144

Horse bit

Acquired by Bandinel 1819 – 1849

Mandingo, West Africa

Slaver's horse equipment, possibly of Turkish or Arabic origin.

44. 124/2000/3

Figure

Early 20th century

Kamba, Kenya

An example of early East African souvenir art. The cloth might have been produced in Gujarat, India.

45. E597

Cartridge belt

Acquired 1864

Abeokuta, SW Nigeria

This leather belt was taken from a Dahomean soldier by the Reverend Townsend during the siege of Abeokuta.

46. 434/2005/39/2

Woven basket

Late 19th century

Zulu, Colony of Natal, South Africa

Food baskets were typically round in shape and were associated with the womb. However, the women who made them were encouraged by missionaries to change the basket shape.

47. 60/1948/93

Prayer beads

Before 1885

Gubat, Sudan

This item is recorded as being taken from a Mahdist soldier by surgeon William Hamilton Briggs (Broun) of the Khartoum Relief Expedition.

48. E583

Ceremonial drum

Donated by R. Redway in 1866

Kongo (Vili), Loango coastal region of Central Africa

A shrine drum depicting a woman who is possibly surmounted by forces from the ancestral world. Whilst the means of acquisition is unknown, the drum was damaged by insects.

49. 202/1915

Commemorative head

Made circa 1848

Edo, Benin City, SW Nigeria

Donated to the museum in 1915 by Ralph Locke, one of two named survivors of the ill-fated trade mission to Benin City which was attacked in January 1897.

50. 601/2005/1/1

Astonian Press Native Register

Printed 1950s

Lusaka, Zambia

A 'native register' donated by a former farmer in Zambia. Due to the political turmoil of the time, he decided to return to Britain.

51. 434/2005/41

Natives Labour Identification Passport

Stamped 1902

Gauteng Province, South Africa

Official worker's pass for a man called Johannes.

52. E1938

Magistrate's certificate

Issued 14 April 1877

Cape Colony South Africa

This document identifies an African named 'Plaatje Menze' as a subject of the British Crown.

53. 16/2013

Man's tunic (*dashiki*)

Purchased by Solomon Olatunji in 2013

Bambara, Kayes, Mali

This hand-woven cotton tunic was decorated with traditional mud dye (*bògòlanfini*).

54. HAND-2015-1080

Barkcloth purse

Made early 2000s

Kampala, Uganda

This machine-embroidered purse is the creation of Ugandan designer Sarah Nakisanze. Her *kakeega* pattern celebrates her identity as a modern Ugandan.

55. 114/2004/6

Airline travel bag

Acquired 1970s

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Ethiopian started operations in 1946, and has become one of the largest airline companies in the world.