

# How to use this book

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The following remarks are intended to elucidate the questions this book can be expected to answer.

### 1. Aim

The purpose of the inventories is to provide a survey of what is to be found in Swiss museums of ethnography in respect of their development as scholarly documentations and as instruments of a discipline - both with a view to communicating visual illustrations of the cultures in question or (in the case of comparative collections) of a more precisely defined aspect of culture.

Consequently the present lists cannot supply a complete documentation of every object from any particular tribal culture to have reached a Swiss museum. The lists thus replace neither a detailed catalogue of the single pieces included in a collection nor the work done on or with the original object.

### 2. Arrangement of the inventories

The lists are arranged alphabetically according to the towns the museums are in and, within the single institutions, alphabetically according to continents (excluding Europe). Collections from Europe have only been taken into account (as appendices) in the cases of Geneva and Neuchâtel, in accordance with the French meaning of "ethnographie", which includes the study of folklore.

### 3. Information on the single museums

Each museum is thus presented in a compact sequence of:

- Introduction: information on the opening hours, staff, library and archives, history and significance of the collections, exhibitions and other museum activities
- List of publications on sale
- Survey of the number of collection units and of the arrangement of the lists
- Inventory surveys arranged according to continents and major continental regions

#### 4. Bibliography and Index

All bibliographical references have been combined in a single bibliography. An Index of the Names of Countries, Regions and Tribes can also be found at the end of the book.

#### 5. Arrangement of the collections

In respect of the classification of the collections according to provenience on the one hand and for the disposition of the tables on the other, various preliminary decisions had to be taken, allowing for the divergent situations of the single museums as regards sources. The desire to work out a practical survey which would both fulfil elementary ethnological demands and be as historically accurate as possible was confronted with a wealth of information on individual accessions to museum collections. Thus the lists in their present form are the result of repeated subjective examination and selection with a view to giving prominence to what we deemed important and putting aside for the time being what we judged to be distracting.

The following headings indicate the most important decisions and at the same time explain the classification of the pieces in the collections in various categories as well as the division of the tables into six columns (cf. Sample Table, p. 34).

##### 5.1. Distinguishing "Collections" and "Miscellaneous Acquisitions" (see Sample Table, Columns 4, 1, 5 and 6)

Major emphasis has been placed on including single, self-contained collections along with the documentation pertaining to them and not on listing important individual pieces. Groups of objects containing, as a rule, more than twenty pieces connected by either origin (geographical and ethnic provenience, collector) and/or by materials, processing techniques and function as criteria are considered to constitute collections.

Single objects and smaller groups of three to approximately 20 pieces have thus generally been classified under "Miscellaneous" (i.e. various pieces of different local provenience from various collectors). A survey

of the miscellaneous pieces of a continental collection, generally classified according to 30-year periods, concludes the inventory of each respective section.

Small groups of objects whose origin and/or pertaining documentation lend them the character of outstanding specimens form exceptions. They are classified among the collections. Important individual pieces are occasionally referred to in the "Comments" (column 6) on the survey of "Miscellaneous".

Otherwise only insufficiently evaluated and catalogued material has been classified under "Miscellaneous".

### 5.2. Year of Acquisition (Sample Table, Column 1)

The single acquisitions of collections are generally listed in chronological order, the year they were registered at the museum being decisive. Where there is divergent collection data, it is mentioned after the collector's name in column 5. In the case of the Ethnographical Museum of the University of Zurich, this system could not be conformed to.

If there are several dates (usually separated by slanted lines) in the first column, this is to indicate that the items of a coherent documentation reached the museum from the same source over a period of several years, sometimes with considerable intervals in between.

### 5.3. Classification within the Continents and Names Dealing with Provenience (Table Heading and Columns 2 and 3, cf. Maps 1-4 pp. 37-45)

For the purposes of the present survey the common classification of museum pieces according to continents and subcontinents has been standardized. Maps 1-4 and their legends establish the course of the boundaries. Together with the designations introduced for large, connected regions and the names of countries, which are often only of an informative nature and have not been able to be brought completely up to date, column 2 thus yields a rough geographical grid for provenience.

In column 3 the ethnic unit whose culture is documented is listed in so far as it could be determined on the basis of the collector's or respec-

tive museum's records as available when individual lists were made. The spelling of these names has not been standardized.

#### 5.4. Number of Objects (Column 4)

Usually the number of inventory units is given. These administrative units may include several similar or closely related pieces; hence the number of single objects need not agree with the number of inventory units listed.

#### 5.5. Collector (Column 5)

Under the heading of "Collector" the names of those people from whom the respective museum acquired the groups of objects in question (by buying or trading, as a gift, request or loan, or on the basis of a working relationship) will be found. If the pieces were collected on the spot by the collector personally, this is indicated by the addition "Expedition" (also Exp.) or - if the collecting was a by-product of a different activity (e.g. in the case of missionaries, geologists, businessmen) - "primary" (also: pr.)

The addition of "secondary" (also: sec.), on the other hand, indicates a collector who systematically assembled material on a culture or a comparative topic second-hand.

The location behind a collector's name indicates his place of residence; it is not included if the collector lived or lives in the same town as the respective museum.

Dates in the column refer to when the collection in question was assembled (for possible discrepancies with regard to the date of acquisition by the museum see above, remarks on column 1).

#### 5.6. Remarks (Column 6)

This column contains a brief characterization of the collection and information on published sources (in so far as this information was accessible when the lists were being made). The publications mentioned are generally either ones in which the respective collection or at least a considerable part of it is documented or then publications pertaining to films and exhibitions which touch upon the collection in question (or part of it).

## 6. Concluding remarks

Compromises have had to be made, both by the keepers of the single museum collections in the compilation of the survey (cf. introductory remarks to the individual museum) and by the editors within the framework of the SEG/SSE Museum Committee. Some will miss detailed information on the pieces summarily included under the heading "Miscellaneous". Others will certainly feel the want of a classification of the collections according to functions within the individual cultures and a systematic comparison like the one on which Zurich's African collection has experimentally been based (cf. below, p.409). Some might have welcomed an index of collectors, others might have liked more precise references to archived documentations. And the historian will have to find information on the connections with the history of ethnology elsewhere (e.g. in Paravicini 1943). In view of the size of the collections, the work involved in making such desirable additions would have been too great. Thus all those who are looking for more than these lists can provide at the moment are asked to take into account the difficulties Swiss museums in general are constantly confronted with: there is not enough space (this not so much for the proper storage of objects as for a thorough study of them), and there is not enough personnel to concentrate on the scholarly study of connected collection complexes and the appertaining documentations. But the phase of dealing with the scholarly problems arising from this work cannot be omitted if exhibition activity is not to decline on its own one day. It is our hope that dealing intensively with the inventory surveys in their present form will succeed in providing museum ethnologists with new inspiration for their work. The SEG/SSE Museum Committee, as editor of this volume, would be happy to receive suggestion for future improvements.

(English Version by Eileen Walliser, Riehen)

SAMPLE TABLE

CITY  
Museum

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Year of Accession	Provenience Area	Ethnic unit	Number
Year of registration by the museum	Designation of the geographical provenience	Designation of the ethnic unit (tribe, cultural-linguistic unit) whose culture is documented by the collection	
1795	.....		....
.	.....		..
.	.....	.....	..
.	.....		..
1978	.....	.....	..
Miscellaneous			
1795-1839	...miscellaneous		..
1840-1869			...
1870-1899			..
1900-1929			.
1930-1959	.....		.
1960-1978			..

1) BS = Basel 1-54 NE = Neuchâtel 1-28  
 BE = Bern 1-34 ZH = Zurich  
 GE = Geneva 1-24 Rb = Museum Rietberg 1-5  
 Vk = Völkerkundemuseum der Universität 1-20

Cantonal abbreviation and running table pagination  
for each museum (eg. BS 9)<sup>1)</sup>  
Continent<sup>2)</sup> and Subcontinent<sup>3)</sup>  
(if necessary special list)

Column 5	Column 6
Collector	Remarks
<p>Name, type of collecting done, possibly year</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....(pr.)</p> <p>.....(sec.)</p> <p>.....(exp.)</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p>	<p>Composition of the collection characterized in key-words, no complete listing; Lit. (French Réf.): information on publications about the collection and exhibitions or films</p> <p>.....</p> <p>..... Lit.: Author + Year</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

<sup>2)</sup>Continents: 1. Africa  
2. America  
3. Asia  
4. Oceania  
(5. Europe)

<sup>3)</sup>Subcontinents: For delimitations and  
numbering see maps,  
p. 37-45

