



Title: Media-based presentation of the 'Hoffmann Collection of Northern Sotho Cultural Heritage' as a national cultural treasure and its communication

Hoffmann Collection of Northern Sotho Cultural Heritage

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Event: Workshop, Pretoria/South Africa, 1-2 October 2012
Conference, Berlin/Germany, 11 April 2013

Brief description:

Between 1897 and 1943 the Berlin missionary Carl Gustav Hoffmann and his assistants at the mission assembled a large number of documents, drawings and photographs making up the so-called Northern Sotho Cultural Heritage. Today these items are scattered between various institutions based in Germany and South Africa.

The aim of the research project entitled "Hoffmann Collection of Northern Sotho Cultural Heritage" is to open up this extensive collection, digitising it and making it accessible to the general public. Besides its scientific objectives this project hopes above all to safeguard the oral traditions (which are nowadays frequently becoming lost to its people) for the inhabitants of Northern Sotho. This does not just involve the repatriation¹ of this endangered cultural heritage from Germany to South Africa with the help of new technology such as digitisation and electronic media, but above all the compilation and presentation of all available materials, aided through exchanges between libraries and archives.

For the past two years a South African-German research team based at the Department for African Studies at the Humboldt University of Berlin, the University of South Africa and the University of Pretoria has been hard at work, gathering together all items of this endangered cultural heritage, safeguarding them with the help of new technology such as digital media, and exchanging materials. Ultimately the plan is for the Hoffmann Collection to be held by the UNISA Library Archives in Pretoria.

At the two-day workshop held at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of Pretoria "*Past(ssed?) encounters, visual(ised) and digital(ised): On archiving colonial knowledge*" in relation to

¹Repatriation = return to the country of origin
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the Hoffmann Collection on 1 and 2 October 2012, the progress of the project was discussed and made accessible to the general public. The event was rounded off by debate about the transcription and translation of the archived documents as well as explanations and a description of their historical background before an audience of some 40 scientists and students.

Another event, a one-day conference, has been scheduled for 11 April 2013 at the Humboldt University of Berlin. The conference will finish with a cultural evening hosted by the Embassy of South Africa in Berlin. It will include the screening of a documentary about Hoffmann's life and an exhibition of photographs, as well as a panel discussion. On this occasion the official exchange of the scanned and digitised archive material from the "Hoffmann Collection of Northern-Sotho Cultural Heritage" will take place between the Executive Director of Library Services at the University of South Africa, Dr. Buhle Mbambo-Thata, and Dr. Wolfgang Kroge, Director of Evangelisches Landeskirchliches Archiv in Berlin (ELAB).