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**DAHOMEY! DAHOMEY!**

**DR JULIA KELLY**

# OUTPUT INFORMATION

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"Dahomey! Dahomey!": the reception of Dahomean art in  
France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

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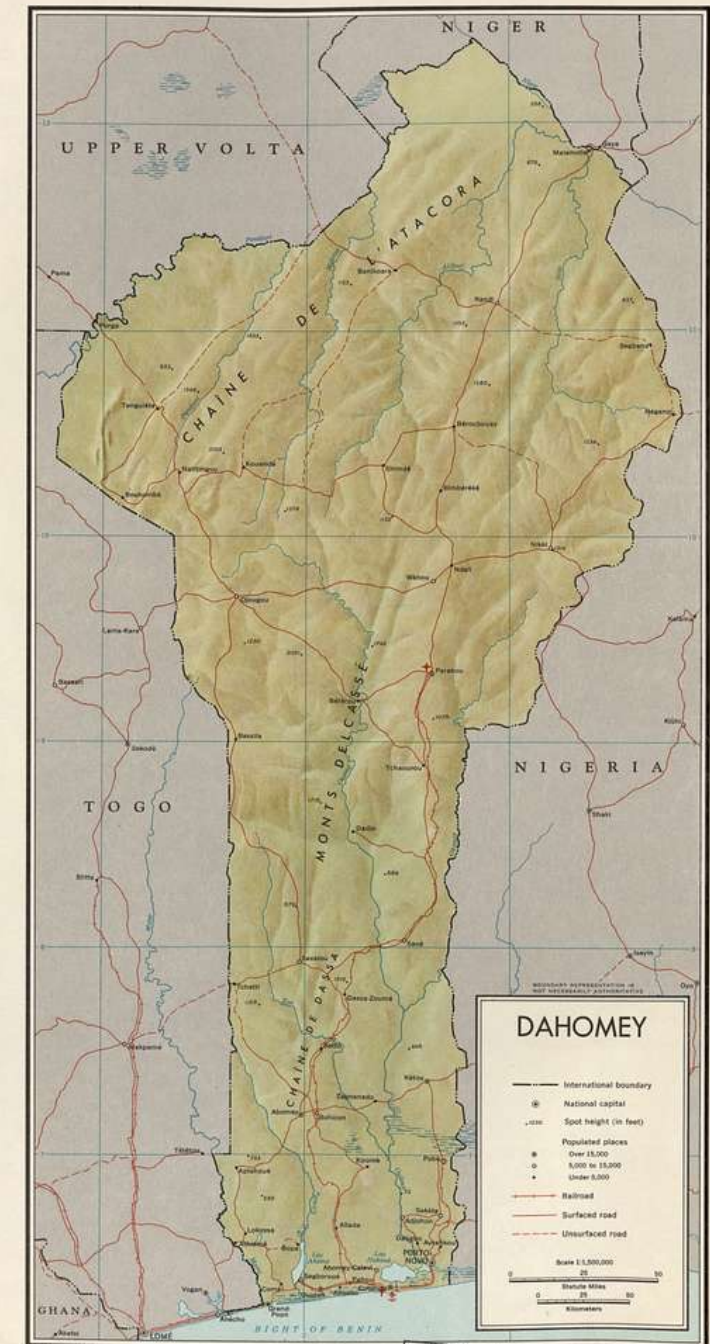
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# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

This essay makes an original contribution to existing understandings of the appropriation of non-western, especially African, cultural forms by western artists in the early 20th century. By focusing on a group of royal portrait sculptures brought back to the Trocadero Ethnographic Museum in Paris from the former French colony of Dahomey, it demonstrates that many of our assumptions about colonial artefacts arriving in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century are fundamentally untrue and serve only to perpetuate colonialist stereotypes.

The essay is based on primary archival research conducted in Paris in the archives of the Musée de l'Homme (now the Musée Quai Branly). It uses anthropological accounts of artefacts seized in West Africa to challenge art historical accounts of so-called primitivism, alongside primary source writings by artists and art writers of the period. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to cultural objects in order to uncover their original contexts and meanings.

This essay relates to my book *Art, Ethnography and the Life of Objects* (2007, reprint 2012) and to a body of research which looks at the encounter of anthropology and art in the 20th century. Recent papers for a symposium at the Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg 'Contemporary Art and the Decolonisation of Museums', 2016, and for a research seminar at Loughborough University, 'Decolonising artists' non-western collections', 2017, disseminated this research. The *Journal of Art Historiography* is a peer-reviewed, online open access scholarly journal published by the University of Birmingham.

Published in a special issue on the European reception of 'primitive art' around 1900, this essay uses anthropological sources to create an alternative narrative about the status and meaning of African art in France in this period, countering misconceptions about its 'primitive' nature. It has been cited in an article in *Cabinet* magazine, 2015 (<http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/58/lucas.php>).

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Links:

<https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/12-jun-2015/>

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