



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12019	12	Benin City	Label: Bell (<i>élo</i>) put on shrine of father or mother; rung at time of sacrifice.	-	Small bell with loop handle and clapper. The surface of the bell has a cross-hatch design and spiral element on one side. The clapper is suspended from a piece of wire hung through a hole in the top of the bell. XRF dating: late 19th century.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12028.2	21	Benin City	Catalogue: Bead bangle. Catalogue additional note: Bangle of coloured beads worn by women (<i>iko imegbwe</i>).	Purchased with several others £2 17s 6d	Bangle or bracelet formed from a tube of fabric covered with glass seed beads. The beads form regular zig-zag bands of colour. The beads are red, pink, blue, green and black. The fabric underlying the beads can be seen as a seam around the interior. (1 of 2)



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12063	55	Benin City	Label: Flute of camwood, mouthpiece shape of fish.	5s	A flute carved from wood. The mouthpiece is crescent-shaped, with a diamond-shaped section below the mouthpiece. The shaft of the flute has a hole around 80mm from the base of the shaft where the cavity from the mouthpiece ends and a further hole at the end, for suspension. There is a hole drilled through the diamond-shaped section at right angles to the shaft.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z12088.1-2	80	Benin City	Label: Box for Kola nuts, highly carved.	4s 9d	Rectangular wooden box carved with geometric patterns. There is a raised rectangle running along the central line of the lid which may act as a handle. The handle, lid and two long sides of the box have been incised with lines in block patterns. There is extensive historical insect damage to the base.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12112	105	Benin City	Catalogue: Pot (<i>oluebo</i>), used as Olokun.		Large ceramic vessel, only partially fired, with rounded base, three vertical strap handles and two horizontal loop handles. There is a large seated, female figure at the front of the vessel with a platform under the splayed, amphibian-like feet. The head is disproportionately large for the body and shows scarification marks and an elaborate headdress. The entire vessel is decorated with incised lines, indented dots and modelled snakes on the vertical handles.



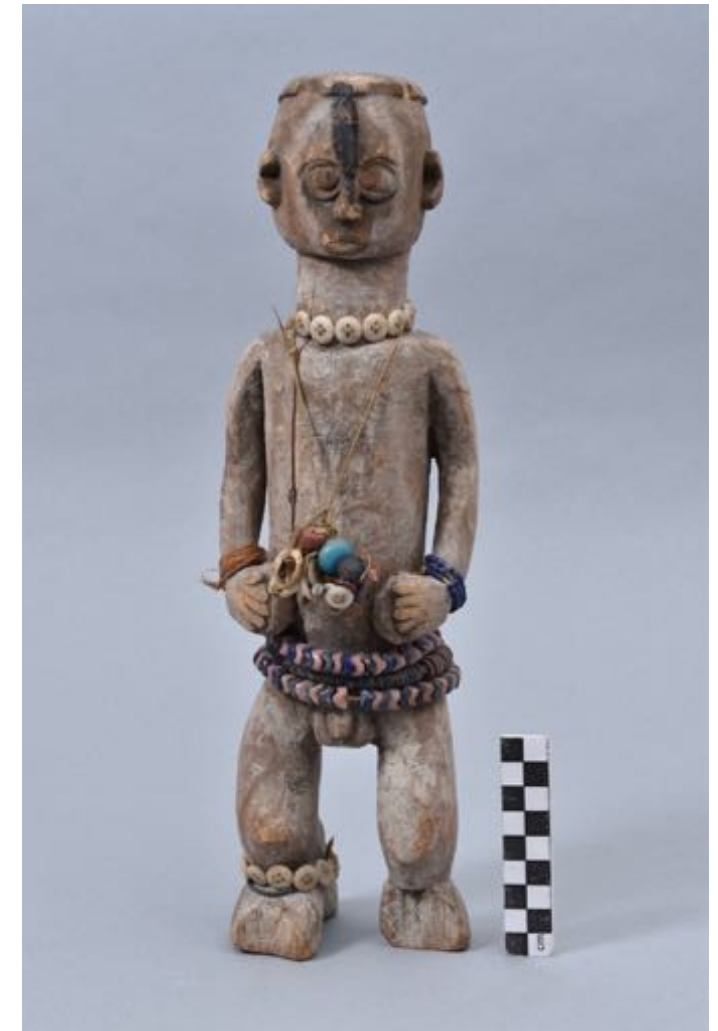
MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12125	117	Benin City	Label: Toy Drum (<i>emagu</i>)	2s 6d	Toy drum made from a small barrel with skin stretched over the top and bottom. The barrel is made from planks of wood held together with two rings of bent wood or cane. The skin is stretched over the ends and turned back up over a piece of ?wood before being firmly tied to the skin at the other end.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12138	130	Benin City	Label: Toy for baby; part of gourd and five bells. Catalogue additional note: Baby's toy, part of gourd with 5 small bells hanging by string from holes in same.	1s 6d	Toy or rattle made from a section of gourd with five bells and two cowries. The horizontal section of gourd is open at both ends and has eight square holes cut into it. There are five copper alloy bells with clappers, attached with twisted string to the gourd, and two cowries on a single piece of twisted string.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12148	139	Benin City	Label: <i>Akobibuka</i> (doll) / Dressed as priestess of Ake (Ohake); the hairdressing at back is called <i>agbilesa</i> , on top <i>okoku</i> .		Wooden carving of a woman with scarification marks and personal adornments, painted white with blue and red. The figure has an elaborate hairstyle, with four projections from the top of the head and a section at the nape of the neck. The figure's long breasts are painted blue, as is the groin area, and there is a design painted in blue on the stomach. There is a small rectangular projection on the front of the neck, a necklace, two armllets and two bracelets all painted reddish brown.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12153	144	Benin City	Label: Doll, bead necklace, belt and bracelet, painted. Catalogue additional note: Doll, baby boy, with bead necklace, belt and bracelet, painted.		Carved wooden figure of a male with many beaded ornaments and black pigment on the face. The figure has a necklet and anklet made from white buttons; a bracelet and anklet of small glass seed beads; a girdle of pink and blue glass beads shaped like vertebrae and red and blue discs; and a bundle of assorted glass beads, cowries, buttons, discs and ?metal hanging around the neck.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z12171.1-2	162	Benin City	Label: Box for Kola nuts, leopard shaped.	5s	Small box, shaped like a crouching leopard, with a lid. The box with head, tail and four legs are carved from the same piece of wood and one of the legs is broken and missing. The lid sits within the top of the body. The spots are shaped like open rings and have possibly been stamped into the surface with hot metal. There are also dark rectangular marks on the tail, neck, legs and around the edges of the lid.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 12196	187	Benin City	Catalogue: Uhumilan. Catalogue additional note: Carved head with hat and feather up at side; oblong hole at back (?use).	3s	A highly decorated, carved wooden head with cap and feather. Small pieces of black wood have been placed in the eyes and around the forehead. The whole is decorated with deeply incised lines leaving sections in relief. There is a hole in the decoration at either side of the face, and a deep channel in the back with corresponding holes in the cap and base.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 20317	308	Benin City	Label: Stave (Izuku of Oga), highly carved. Catalogue: Izuku of Oga.		Carved wooden staff with central rattle section and seated figure above this. The figure is wearing a conical hat, has long braids of hair at the rear, scarification marks on the face and body, and is holding a snake in one hand and an orb in the other. The rattle section is incised with geometric patterns and has three slits in it through which the rattle can be seen.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 25224	304	Benin City	Catalogue: Ogun's wife.		Carved wooden figure of a kneeling woman holding a staff and a knife. The figure is wearing a cap, armbands, anklets and bracelets, and has scarification marks above the eyes. There are lines incised into the torso at the front and the sides and three braids of hair hanging down at the back.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 25231	317	Benin City	Catalogue: Ouonuzala.		Wooden carving of a figure with an abstract body. The figure is wearing a ridged hat and has scarification marks above the eyes. There is a triangular decoration with incised diagonal grooves below the chin and ?braids down each side of the body.



MAA Accession No.	NWT No.	Location collected	NWT description	Price paid	MAA catalogue description
Z 25232	318	Benin City	Catalogue: Euu of Ute.		Wooden carving of a head on a stylised body. The head is wearing an elaborate hat or hairstyle and the face has scarification marks above the eyes. There is a triangular decoration below the face with diagonal incised lines at both the front and the back, possibly indicating a collar.

Suggested avenues for further research:

- Some of the objects selected relate to the Benin Court and ancestral altars (e.g. bell Z 12019, carved head Z 12196 and staves Z20317, Z 25224, Z 25231, Z 25232). There is a very large literature on this topic. A good starting point might be Cathy Curnow, *Iyare! Splendor and Tension in Benin's Palace Theatre* (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2016), see also www.iyare.net. It is likely that the selected objects were not, however, taken from traditional shrines where they had been part of ceremonies and rituals, but were acquired by Thomas at markets and, in the case of the wooden staves, probably commissioned directly from carvers.
- Two of the objects are described as 'dolls' (Z 12148, Z 12153). Thomas had a long standing interest in dolls from around the world. In 1906 (before he went to West Africa), he published a questionnaire in the anthropological journal *Man* (which I attach). This might be interesting for the Art Assassins to think about. What defines a doll? What makes it different from other representations of human figures?
- Two of the other objects are also associated with children – the rattle (Z 12138) and toy drum (Z 12125). It might be interesting to think about how such toys were also commonplace in Britain at that time.
- The flute (Z 12063) was not merely a musical instrument, played for pleasure. In West Africa the flute is often regarded as the voice of spirits or ancestors, and is associated with masquerade. See the project blog <https://re-entanglements.net/alele-oja-flute/> which includes some of Thomas's historical sound recordings of flutes and some YouTube clips of flute players in Nigeria.
- Two of the objects are boxes for containing kola nuts (Z 12088.1-2, Z 12171.1-2). Kola nuts are often used in rituals and ceremonies, used in divination, and shared as a way of welcoming strangers. For this reason, they were stored in beautiful boxes like these. Art Assassins could do some research on kola. See <https://www.culturesofwestafrica.com/ode-kola-nut/> for a starting point.
- The Olokun pot (Z 12112) will be the focus of a conservation project at UCL. Olokun is a deity of the sea/rivers in Edo and Yoruba speaking areas of Nigeria. Pots such as this were placed on altars and contained water. I attach an article about Olokun related art.