

Colonial Racism and the Benin Bronze Artefacts, 1862-1960

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Abstract : This research is on colonial racism and the Benin bronze artefacts between 1862 and 1960. It analyses the British racial sentiments against the Benin people that heralded colonial rule and how they influenced the perceptions of the artworks during the period. The aim is to contribute to the knowledge of colonial rule in Benin by bringing to the fore its impacts on the perception and interpretation of the Benin bronze artefacts during the period. Primary and secondary sources were utilised and the historical method was adopted. The findings reveal that the first British racial propaganda against the Benin people started in 1862 and that it was consciously orchestrated to manoeuvre public opinion for the ill-conceived colonial project. The research also reveals that the Benin people were not alone in this, as other peoples of Africa that were targeted for British colonial domination suffered the same fate. Findings also show that racial propaganda was actually used to rationalised colonial rule in Benin and that it later influenced the interpretations and perception of the Benin bronze artefacts throughout the colonial period and beyond.

Keywords : Benin, Bronzes, colonial, racism

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