

More than five years after two of the school's first-ever Black students initiated a discussion about returning the work, a Benin Bronze held for more than 100 years at [Jesus College](#) in [Cambridge](#), England, is headed back to Nigeria. Jesus College will be among the first institutions in the U.K. to undertake such a [repatriation](#).

The object being returned is a sculpture of a rooster known in Edo as an Okpa or in English as the Benin Cockerel. Sculptures like it are common at sites paying homage to queen mothers in the Kingdom of Benin. It was gifted to the school in 1905 by George William Neville, who is known to have taken with him various looted objects following his stint as a shipping agent in Africa, and whose son was a student at Jesus College.

## Related Articles

The Okpa belongs to a larger cache of works known as the [Benin Bronzes](#), which were plundered from Benin by British troops in 1897. The thousands of objects constituting the group have ended up at institutions around the world, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the British Museum.

Amid a recent push to recognize the looting of the Benin Bronzes as a symbol of European colonialism, various museums have undertaken efforts to begin sending back these objects, with the Met among them. Just this week, Germany signed an accord with Nigeria to repatriate thousands of Benin Bronzes in state holdings in 2022. Germany also agreed to help with the construction of the David Adjaye–designed Edo Museum of West African Art in Benin City, which is expected to house repatriated Benin Bronzes, among other objects.

No institution had publicly committed to returning a Benin Bronze before Jesus College did so in 2019, when Sonita Alleyne, the school's master, sent an email to students saying that the Okpa “is not, and never has been, owned by the College.” Her message was the result of several years of activism by two Black students, Amatey Doku and Ore Ogunbiyi, who spotted the sculpture in 2015 and began researching its history. On Friday, Alleyne said in a statement, “This is an historic moment.”

“We thank Jesus College for being a trailblazer,” said Alhaji Lai Mohammed, Nigeria's minister of information and culture, “and we look forward to a similar return of our artefacts by other institutions that are in possession of them.”

Source: [British College to Be Among the First to Return a Benin Bronze](#)