

had not escaped the attention of certain West African commentators, who were able to make use of the crisis to draw attention to their own criticisms of British rule in West Africa. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reported King Edward VII's speech to the Indian people, ending with the terse rejoinder:

The following paragraph of the Royal message is noteworthy, and we hope that the King's Representatives, throughout the British Empire may note it down and act accordingly. 'Steps are being continually taken towards obliterating distinctions of race, as the test of access to posts of public authority and power. In this path I confidently expect and intend the progress henceforward to be steadfast and sure, as education spreads, experience ripens, and the lessons of responsibility are well learned by the keen intelligence and apt capabilities of India.' Would that all in authority, might ponder these weighty words in the King's message and act out the same in the administration of their respective Governments.³⁵

From the context of this remark, it is likely that the racial hierarchy upon which the Franco-British Exhibition was predicated would not have escaped West African critics, especially since the crown colonies of Gambia, the Gold Coast, and Southern Nigeria came in for rather different treatment in most of the British exhibition reviews. Here also, material culture played a crucial role in the representation of these colonies and protectorates. One only has to look at the report in the special exhibition edition of the *Daily Mail* of the 'Land of Marvels, Thrills and Wonders from India and "Crown Colonies"' on the one hand, and 'Sinister Relics of the Savage King', on the other. Here, the coral cloak of the royal insignia from the court of Benin City, and the notorious slaver 'Tippoo-Tib's war horn, despite being acknowledged as a 'fine piece of ivory carving', are nevertheless seen primarily as 'some of the strangest things in the exhibition.'³⁶ Descriptions quickly gave way to sensationalist accounts of the war drum captured by the Jebu expedition of 1892, whose 'associations are very gruesome, as it was used only at the execution of criminals or on the field of battle.'³⁷ These 'associations' were promptly cemented by the statement that 'Devil worship is associated with many of the curios. Sinister indeed is a triple-faced mask covered with human skin flayed from sacrificial victims.'³⁸ Despite a mention of the 'artistic skill' visible in the Benin bronzes, the final impression rests, predictably, with the 'cannibalism and other unpleasant habits' that were said to exist side by side with them.³⁹ Significantly, the *Lagos Weekly Record* shared the *Daily Mail's* conviction that popular interest was generated by what were called 'native curiosities'. The difference here was that the columns of the *Record* focused almost entirely on G.W. Neville's now prestigious and extremely valuable collection of bronzes from Benin City.⁴⁰

Africa's 'heritage', then, was represented as a past that was not worth preserving or nurturing, and which had been necessarily 'killed off' by the benevolent colonial forces. The 'trophy' method of display, which was the chosen format at such events, would have further compounded the images of horror and violence which were the dominant sentiments. The trophy format has already been encountered in chapter four in relation to the 1890 Stanley and African Exhibition, but it is worth expanding here on the possible implications of such a technique. The trophy method could be said to signify on a number of levels. As the name suggests, it served as a signifier of 'capture' and 'conquest'.⁴¹ On another level, the effectiveness of this type of display relied on specific

