



# PRESS RELEASE

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## The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts of Benin and the National Museum of Finland announce the restitution of the Katakè, a royal treasure of Benin

**Cotonou & Helsinki, May 7, 2025** – The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts of Benin and the National Museum of Finland are pleased to announce the restitution of the Katakè, a ceremonial royal stool. The official handover ceremony will take place on May 13, 2025. This significant return marks another important milestone in Benin's ongoing efforts to reclaim emblematic pieces of its cultural heritage held abroad. It also reflects the shared commitment of Beninese and Finnish institutions to advance cultural cooperation through dialogue and mutual respect.

### An iconic royal treasure

The Katakè originates from the Kingdom of Danxome, established in the 17th century on the territory of what is now the Republic of Benin. "Katakè" refers to a three-legged royal stool used in official ceremonies as a symbol of stability, authority, and unity. It is believed to be the first seat used during the coronation of a king.

In 1892, during the colonial conquest of Danxome, French troops under the command of Colonel Alfred Dodds seized several royal artifacts from the palace. The Katakè was among twenty-seven (27) such items that were transported to Paris and housed in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, later renamed the Musée de l'Homme in 1937. In 1939, through an exchange involving fifty-nine (59) ethnographic objects from Africa, Asia, and Oceania, the Katakè entered the collection of the National Museum of Finland.

### A historic moment in the ongoing restitution of Benin's royal heritage

In November 2021, at the request of the Government of Benin, the French Republic returned twenty-six (26) of the twenty-seven (27) artifacts taken by Colonel Dodds.

The Republic of Benin subsequently submitted a formal request to the Finnish authorities for the return of the Katakè. The National Museum of Finland responded



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positively following a thorough provenance review conducted in collaboration with the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris. The process was strengthened during an official visit to Helsinki by a Beninese delegation led by Mr. Olushegun Adjadi Bakari, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin, on November 4–5, 2024. Following a letter dated December 10, 2024, signed by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts of the Republic of Benin, experts from both countries began drafting the operational protocol for restitution.

### **Official ceremony in Benin**

On Tuesday, May 13, 2025, an official ceremony will be held in Cotonou to mark the formal transfer of ownership and the return of the Katakè to its homeland.

## **About the Katakè**

The Katakè is a three-legged ceremonial royal stool. Used during coronation rites, it is a central symbol of royal authority within the Kingdom of Danxome, representing unity and stability. It is one of 27 royal treasures looted by French forces in 1892.

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