

*Transcending Juju: Jonathan Adagogo Green's 1897 Portrait of the King of Benin, Af,A46.25.*

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JA Green signed and stamped a number of his photographs "JA Green Artist-Photographer" on the verso of the prints. This two-word archival hint allows an analysis of the portrait of the king of Benin as a prisoner as an open-ended discussion on the relationship between Nigerian historicity and artistic transcendence in the modernising phase at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I am extracting the image from the one-sided speculative and sensationalist British narratives of the Benin "expedition" that blur the lines between the historical and the political as well as from a post-colonial ethnographic discourse. I view the image as an artistic vision, embedded in Nigerian led epistemologies and independent late 19<sup>th</sup> century art photography. Green's creative trajectory is directly linked to Bishop Ajayi Crowther's patronage and his emphasis on the arts as a firm component of a new concept of historicity, art and nascent Nigerian nationalism.

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