A few months ago I was contacted by the Dutch art crime investigator Arthur Brand to identify what appeared to be a stolen Ethiopian crown kept in an apartment in Rotterdam. How did such a precious object end up in Holland? Where did it come from? What was its original function? What kind of meaning did it have for those who used it? To whom should it be returned? These were some of the questions turning in my mind as I travelled to see the crown. Answering them provides a glimpse into a history of exchanges between the Horn of Africa and Europe in the past and present, sheds light on the ritual and devotional activities of Christians in early-modern Ethiopia, and forces us to confront some of the challenges involved in the repatriation of cultural property at a time when museums and governments are increasingly reconsidering questions of ownership of heritage acquired from Africa and other extra-European contexts during the colonial period.