

H.O.M.E. ‘Human remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation’

From colonial collections of human remains towards processes of repatriation and beyond

Report on the colonial collections of human remains of
the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)

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Introduction

Focusing on the convoluted and painful provenance of colonial collections of human remains and conscious of its own complex historical role, the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) adopted a range of methodologies and disciplinary approaches from archival ethnography to collaborative and multi-sited fieldwork with unique partnerships in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The objectives of the RMCA within the HOME-project were threefold. First, to gain insight into the whole of the colonial collections of human remains by assembling an updated inventory with exact numbers and geographical indices. Secondly, understanding the provenance of these human remains by deepening the museum epistemologies of classification and collecting, brought us to institutional biographies of donations, without ascribing a so-called social life to death (Appadurai, 1986; Halperin, 1994, p. 119). Archival research formed a necessary basis for a better understanding of the trajectories of these sensible collections. This resulted in an updated inventory and the assembling of descriptive biographies for the anatomical collections, today managed at the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (RBINs). The RMCA still holds human remains in biological, ethnographic and archaeological collections. Inspired by the theoretical approach of Kopytoff, we stretched cultural and structural questions concerning the biographies of the collections to make “salient what otherwise remains obscure” (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 67). However, provenance research should go beyond the concept of object biographies and inscribe collaboration. Therefore, a third goal was to establish contacts with diverse interlocutors in the DR Congo and civil society actors, represented by Congolese diaspora, in Belgium to, simply put, question them about suitable pathways of repatriation. This process engaged us to critically look at proclaimed collaboration, dialogue and co-creation within the project. At the same time this exercise confronted us with the need to open up provenance research to oral histories and collaborative fieldwork initiated by the current collection holders towards different interlocutors, from government actors to source communities. Dialogue with interlocutors in DRC and the fieldwork research concerning the limited biographies of the collections was not only central to value the past and present, but confronted us with the past in the present (Clifford, 2019, p. 120). This confrontation was, lastly, also present in Belgium, when consulting different associations of civil society with representatives of Congolese diaspora in Belgium. Engaging into dialogue with civil society was no matter how crucial in a growing societal debate on how to deal with our colonial past, as we have seen in the process of the Congo commission. Hence, several sessions for informing various actors of civil society were organized.

This report is structured around four chapters. Each chapter focuses on a principal aspect of colonial collections of human remains. The first chapter centers on the principle of a reassembled or an updated inventory. To this end, the different colonial collections of human remains related or still present at the RMCA were historically contextualized. The second chapter challenges and questions the definition of provenance research on colonial collections of human remains. Open-ended and collaborative ways of researching were suggested. Provenance research is therefore imagined as an accompanying process. In chapter three a number of case studies that are peculiar to these collections were developed. We looked into the known case of Lusinga N’Gombe (1840-1884), which gave rise to a public debate on repatriation. We also researched and addressed new cases, such as that of Ferdinand Van de Ginste (1912-1947). In the last chapter a first light is shed upon challenging collaborations in a fast-changing museumscape in Belgium and the DRC. Awareness of the necessity of equal collaborations grew even more throughout the HOME-project. Due to late programming of a visit of the Congolese partners to Belgium in October and November 2022 the different collaborations and consultations were not fully processed in this chapter. However, the various collaborations are extensively described and a first reflection on challenging collaborations is developed in the conclusions of this report.

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Many Congolese interlocutors and partners helped us to shed light on the dehumanization of the colonial collections of human remains from the DRC. We want to sincerely thank our partners Paul Shemisi, Nizar Saleh and Noah Matanga of Collectif Faire-Part and Stéphane Kabila, Joseph Kasau and Patrick Mudekereza of the Art Center Waza for their critical and insightful contributions. Our gratitude extends to Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembe for his optimistic and illuminous contributions in the DRC, all the staff of the Institut des Musées nationaux du Congo (IMNC) as well as to the School of Criminology in Kinshasa for facilitating the public activities in the DRC. The Parish of Feshi kindly provided housing and nourishment, Honorable Boko and his staff provided logistical support to get from Kinshasa to Feshi. He also introduced us to so many people in the Kwango district. A special thank you to all close contacts and important interlocutors like Juliana Lumumba, Augustin Bikale and Sinzo Aanza in Kinshasa, who helped us to reach out to new contacts and guided us throughout the process.

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In this text, we adopt the term ‘human remains’, inscribed in the project language, because it requires debate on an equal footing with various interlocutors in DRC and Belgium to arrive at a correct designation. A number of valuable initiatives, to articulate ‘human remains’ in colonial collections, have been organized and communicated in recent months. A press release written by activists and experts from civil society, organized on 8 November 2022 referred to the ‘remains of ancestors’; which is translated from the French articulation ‘dépouilles des ancêtres’. This press release has been attached to this report: n°5. In the DRC, several interlocutors spoke of ‘ancestors’, ‘ancestral remains’, as well as ‘human remains’. Prof. Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu proposed the use of the term ‘remains of the elders’; which is translated from the French articulation ‘dépouilles des anciens’ to avoid cultural and biological affiliation issues (Personal communication, Enika Ngongo, 30 November 2022).

‘Interlocutors’ refers in this report to the different conversational partners in DRC throughout the project. More particularly, the term refers to Congolese academia, museum experts, political representatives, traditional representatives and representatives of source communities who accepted filmed conversations on colonial collections of human remains within the framework of the HOME project. We consciously preferred to talk about ‘interlocutors’, because the meetings were informative and interrogative in both ways. The term ‘stakeholder’ is rooted in colonial practices, making from indigenous peoples subjects of study and giving little to no space to their own agency (Darchen and Searle, 2018, p. 18). Indigenous organizations plead for new terms like ‘rights and title holders’ instead of stakeholders (Joseph, 2017). Other terms, like ‘interlocutor’, ‘right holder’ or ‘title holder’ can open up the possibility to more mutual processes of decision-making, which allows for more equal involvement and ownership (Pulver, 2022, p. 39).

‘Countries of origin’ and ‘source communities’ refer to the geographical origin of human remains. The countries and communities are multiple and diverse when looking at the colonial collections of human remains. Therefore, we used a more generic term to refer to all countries

and communities that are related to this specific cultural heritage (Lealy, et al., 2018: 7-8). In the context of this report this cultural heritage centers around displaced human remains in colonial collections. The use of both terms is different depending on different perspectives in the international debate. A more communitarian approach, referring moreover to ‘indigenous communities’, is defended in the UN Declaration of 2007 applying an overall rights-based approach of indigenous peoples (2007, p. 5). The idea of repressed or vulnerable communities in certain countries is evoked in this declaration. Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr make clear in their restitution report to return cultural objects to countries of origin in respect of the cultural sovereignty principle (Sarr and Savoy, 2018, p. 70). In this text we refer to ‘countries of origin’ and ‘source communities’ in two combined perspectives. On the one hand, confirming the principle of cultural sovereignty, by referring to ‘countries of origin’ to address political decisions regarding repatriation. On the other hand, not excluding collaboration with various concerned interlocutors at the level of ‘source communities’ in organized and concrete repatriation processes.

Chances are that the conversation and awareness about language use is well advanced. Certain concepts or ideas in this report will certainly caught up with. Hence, it is important to emphasize continuous research, exchange and debate regarding human remains in colonial collections. A shared use of words between Belgium and the countries of origin in future repatriation processes will be of value to future processes. However, in this report the use of language remains complex, ambiguous and problematic, since no institutional questioning of language use has been developed for more ethical and equitable readings of the colonial archive and collections at the RMCA. Racist, prejudiced and charged harmful language was present during this research, since colonial collections of human remains were embedded in a dominant racial paradigm. The readers of this report should be aware that ambiguous terms will be used in all transparency. Further mitigation towards sensitivities should be addressed in organized dialogues and collaborations with countries of origin and/or source communities.

Bantu-philosophy and the ambiguity of death is a recurring theme in DRC and among Congolese diaspora when addressing colonial collections of human remains. In Bantu thought death is not contemplated nor discussed or prepared, because life does not end with death. It continues in another realm. The deceased is given more attention than the sick or dying person. The body cannot be left alone and needs to be acknowledged in its social anchorage, throughout funeral practices (Ekore and Lanre-Abass, 2016, p. 370; Mujynya, 1972, p. 34). However, in the 1980s Professor Yoka Lye, one of the interlocutors in Kinshasa within the HOME-project, described in his novel *Le Fossoyeur* how the dead and graves are peripheric (1987). This statement, addressed by Filip De Boeck in his article about the relation between death, memory and history, illustrates the ambiguity of both the importance of death as its omission (Boeck, 1998, p. 23 and p. 26).

The importance of being able to re-inscribe the colonial past in the national history of the DRC is evoked by Isidore Ndaywel when he wrote about ‘the invention of contemporary Congo’(Ndaywel è Nziem, 2016). Today he holds a political position as Congolese representative in the African Union. His first reaction as a historian during the filmed conversation in the framework of HOME was: “(...) colonial history really does have many mysteries. I have been studying the history of the Congo for 40 years and I discover new things every day. I could not imagine that during the colonial period 600 human remains were collected by Belgium” (Transcribed to English by Lies Busselen – Personal communication Isidore Ndaywel, 27 January 2022). The impossibility to place, locate or understand the dead in colonial collections of human remains needs to be addressed as well spiritually and epistemically. This report lacks a profound understanding of the spiritual and epistemic connection between death, memory and history in Central-Africa. It does acknowledge the ethical and historical importance to recognize the dead in colonial collections of human remains in relation to the present.

Colonial collections of human remains do not include theoretically the displaced victims of the human zoos in Belgium. In the summer of 1897 seven Congolese Ekia, Gemba, Kitukwa, Mpela, Zao, Samba and Mbange lost their lives after they were exposed in inhuman conditions during the World Exhibition at Tervuren. They are now buried next to the Parish Church of

Saint John Evangelist in Tervuren. They were part of 267 Congolese who were deported from Belgian Congo to Tervuren to be exposed in four staged villages. Sabo, Bitio, Isokoyé, Manguesse, Binda, Mangwanda and Pezo are seven Congolese who died in 1894 during the universal exhibition in Antwerp. They were among the 144 Congolese exhibited in the human zoo of the Antwerp World Fair. Their graves no longer exist. Juste Bonaventure Langa was a baby who died on 8 May 1958 during the World Expo 58. He was buried in the municipal cemetery of Tervuren. It is important to address this painful and inhuman practices based on a body of research on human zoos with experts in Belgium and DRC next to colonial collections of human remains.

A huge body of literature and initiatives is already created (Baloji and Couttenier, 2014; Bancel et al., 2014; Blanchard et al., 2022, 2008; Blanchard and Couttenier, 2017; Chikha and Arnaut, 2013; Couttenier, 2005; *EXPO | Zoo humain - Mensentuin*, 2022). From 9 November until 6 March a temporary exhibition was organized by the AfricaMuseum on the phenomena of human zoos. This exhibition was curated by Maarten Couttenier, Pascal Blanchard and Zana Etambala (Blanchard et al., 2022). During the HOME-project special attention to this topic was embedded in the public activities of the Congolese partners during their stay in Belgium (“Memorial walk and performance in memory of the Congolese victims of Belgium’s human zoos,” 2022).

This is to be considered an important historical context of injustice when looking more broadly at displaced human remains due to colonial practices. These remains are the most known and addressed displaced human remains in broader society in Belgium and DRC. Many interlocutors within the HOME-project stressed the importance of including these displaced human remains in recommendations for future repatriation processes.

Repatriation of Patrice Emery Lumumba //

As already mentioned, this report is limited to collections of human remains related to the RMCA as an institution. Recently, the Belgian and Congolese population were able to witness the repatriation of Patrice Emery Lumumba, the former Prime Minister of Independent Congo. This repatriation process took place after a debate that started a long time ago when the Belgian sociologist Ludo De Witte revealed how the murder on Patrice Lumumba was plotted by the Belgian and American governments. He concluded how and why the Belgian government was responsible and implicated in the murder (De Witte, 1999, 2001). The same year an episode ‘Histories’ on Belgian television showed a detailed testimony of Gérard Soete, a Belgian police agent, on the murder of Patrice Lumumba. Gerard Soete explained how he cut his body in pieces

and dissolved them in sulfuric acid. He described this as well thoroughly in one of his published novels published in the late seventies (Soete, 1978). In the same episode he showed two teeth, claiming they were from Lumumba. Afterwards, he gave an exclusive interview to a Flemish magazin Humo (Antonissen and Van Tendeloo, 2016; Coninck, 2021). When this reached a larger audience in DRC as well and caused movement on diplomatic level, this led to the creation of a special commission of inquiry to state the precise circumstances of the murder on Patrice Lumumba.

In 2004 four historians Luc De Vos, Emmanuel Gerard, Philippe Raxhon and Jules Gérard-Libois published a report commissioned by the Lumumba-commission, according the Belgian government to a moral responsibility for the murder on Patrice Lumumba (De Vos et al., 2004). With this report the arguments and discussions between historians did not end, but the debate on the judicial responsibility of Belgium faded away in the media. A national consensus on Belgians 'moral complicity encouraged however a shift from framing Patrice Lumumba to new stories (De Wilde, 2000, p. 6; Verbeeck, 2007, p. 363). The credence of oral testimonies, which was also a critique on the Lumumba commission, became more popular when looking at the context of Lumumba's murder in research and broader media. In 2016 Hanne Van Tendeloo and Jan Antonissen, two reports from Humo sought out Gerard Soete's daughter, since Gérard Soete himself died in 2000 from a heart attack, for an interview. During the interview, journalists cited the teeth of Patrice Lumumba, which were according to Gerard Soete thrown into the North Sea. The daughter believed this was a mistake and brought out a box containing a tooth (Coninck, 2021). Not much later, after Ludo De Witte filed a complaint, the tooth was confiscated by the Belgian Justice Department.

In 2019 the Flemish tv series 'Children of the colony' showed an important interview with Juliana Lumumba (daughter of Patrice Lumumba) demanding justice from the Belgian government for the murder on her father ("60 jaar geleden werd Patrice Lumumba vermoord, zijn dochter," 2021). In 2020 the youngest son Guy-Patrice Lumumba, started a petition for the repatriation of the tooth of his father and addressed the Belgian King being opposed to repatriate the remains of his father to the Congolese government ("Jongste zoon van Lumumba wil stoffelijke overschotten van vermoorde vader terugkrijgen," 2020). In 2021 Juliana Lumumba addressed the Belgian King and government and asked for a dignified rest place for her father, demanding his remains need to be repatriated to the DRC.

On 20 June 2022, during a ceremony organised by the Belgian government, the Belgian justice system repatriated Lumumba's tooth to the DRC. Once his relics arrived in the DRC they would

travel throughout the country to Lumumba-ville in Sankuru where Lumumba was born (Personal communication with Marie Omba Djunga, 24 february 2022). On 30th June 2022 a burial ceremony was held at Echangeurs at Kinshasa (Kabeya, 2022).

This case study needs appropriate consideration concerning the highly symbolic political and historical ownership of Patrice Emery Lumumba as the first Prime Minister of independent Congo. The repatriation is part of a larger judicial inquiry that is ongoing. Family members are presently awaiting the continuing insights and final conclusions of this inquiry. The repatriation of Patrice Lumumba shows, however, the possibility of repatriation and gives hope for a broader consideration of repatriation as a process of reparation, as stated by Suzanne Monkasa during the museum talk on the HOME-project (*MuseumTalks* | *Quel avenir pour les restes humains ?*, 2022).

1. Inventory of human remains from a colonial context at the RMCA

The emergence of race science, physical or anatomical anthropology, in the 18th and 19th century laid the foundations for the construction of collections of human remains from colonial contexts in western museums. The scientific premise served the objectification and dehumanisation of human remains in a growing competition for the so-called rarest and biggest collections of human remains between western museums (Jenkins, 2010; Legassick and Rassool, 2015; Redman, 2016; Saini, 2019). All scientists working with human remains in the beginning of the 20th century were highly influenced by this dominant paradigm, framing everything with racial description or features (Redman, 2016: 66-67). The collections of human remains in the RMCA were developed between 1899 and the 1970s against this problematic background.

Historically, human remains were deposited at the direction pavilion in the RMCA and from there allocated to different museum sections. According to different historical and scientific understandings and approaches, collections were transferred and re-allocated, between departments and sections (Couttenier, 2010, p. 93). The general register of the Anatomical Anthropology (AA) collections can be read as a palimpsest with overlapping and convoluting classifications, time-bound paradigms and personal biases at the RMCA. Based on the interpretation of the notes and reports included in the AA files and the scientific viewpoints of the three identified writers, namely Émile Coart (1860-1943), Jean Colette (1901-1936) and Maurice Bequaert (1892-1973), scientific biases and different accents according the viewpoints of each writer could be distinguished in the acquisition premises. For more biographical info, please consult: (Cornelissen and Livingstone-Smith, 2015; Couttenier, 2012; Lacroix, 1948).

Human remains were obtained by various means in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Within the historical context of the RMCA the means and time frames to obtain human remains could be understood in four relative categories of (1) collected human remains as war trophies after colonial expeditions and exhumed remains for racial study, allocated to the AA collections from 1887 until 1960, (2) human remains excavated during archaeological surveys from 1960 until 1975, (3) remains integrated in cultural objects, allocated to or purchased by the ethnographical service from 1912 until 1981 and (4) human remains that were classified to wet and dry collections of the biological department from 1962 until 1992 after the dismantling of physical anthropology collections in the 1960s. The decline of physical anthropology already started at the turn of the century and made place for a growing interest in archaeology at the museum in Tervuren (Couttenier, 2012).

1.1. Anatomical Anthropology collections (1899-1960)

The AA collections obtained in colonial context were partly transferred in 1964 and 1965 to the Department of Paleontology at RBINs in Brussels. Since the RMCA had been transferred from the Ministry of Colonies to the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1962, certain responsibilities of the RMCA and RBINs were aligned in the 1960s. The collections of mineralogy, petrography and prehistory were transferred from RBINs to the RMCA and the collections of physical anthropology and paleontology from the RMCA were supposed to go to RBINs (Allen F., Roberts, 2012; 2018; Wastiau, 2000, Leloup, 2008). This was ratified on 24 August 1964 by ministerial agreement (Belgisch Staatsblad, 27/05/1965).

The historical AA collection counts at least 448 registered human remains from the DRC (415), Rwanda (19), Congo-Brazzaville (2), Tanzania (1), Burundi (1), Kenia (1) and Germany (1). Furthermore, there is one registration of an animal skull (AA 449) and 133 mouldings and 32 face casts.

Countries	human remains	mouldings	face casts	animal	Total
DRC	415	133	21	1	529
Rwanda	19	0	0	0	19
Burundi	1	0	0	0	1
Congo-Brazzaville	2	0	0	0	2
Tanzania	1	0	0	0	1
Kenia	1	0	0	0	1
Namibia	0	0	11	0	11
Germany	1	0	0	0	1
?	5	0	0	0	5
Total	448	132	32	1	614

These numbers are estimates based on the inventory registrations and not on the physical presence of human remains in RBINs. The majority of the Africa collection at RBINs comes from the transfer in 1964 and 1965, although there are numerous human remains which were bought or donated to RBINs directly. Note that some of the human remains currently at the RMCA were identified as originally registered in the general register of the AA collection. Namely AA 149 the skull of Prince Kapampa, AA 45 and AA 46, two mummified human remains, now registered in the biological and conserved in the ethnographical collections at the RMCA.

A rough estimation of more than 85% from the human remains comes from the DRC with an estimated number of 374 remains donated by more than 32 donors, counting six military expeditors, five colonial agents, six scientific expeditors of the museum, four international scientists, three medical doctors and nurses, five missionaries and three entrepreneurs:

Democratic Republic Congo						
Military expeditors	Colonial administrators	Scientific expeditors RMCA	International scientific staff	Medical staff	Missionaries	Entrepreneurs
Société d'anthropologie de Bruxelles (SAB)	Ferdinandus-Arthur Feshi (1912-1947)	Pierre Golenvaux (1901-1972)	James Paul Chapin (1889-1964)	Dr. Jørgensen	Jozef Basiel Costermans (1903-1957)	Valckenaere (?)
Alphonse Cabra (1862-1932)	Marcel Maenhaut van Lemberge (1888 - 1972)	Gaston De Witte (1897-1980)	Lidio Cipriani (1892-1967)	Mme. Harford-Jordens	Marist Brothers	Paul Quarré (?)
Émile Storms (1846-1918)	René Antoine Théophile Luja (1891-?)	Maurits Leopold Maria Bequaert (1892-1973)	Jean-Baptiste Jadin (1906-1999)	Friedrich Hautmann (1890 - 1976)	[Arsène] Henrion (?-?)	F. Vandelanotte
Armand Hutereau (1875-1914)	Marc Marie Joseph Florent Ghislain Gérard (1918-?)	Narcisse Leleup (1912-2001)	Laszlo Scheitz (1897-1963)		Karel Dillen (?-?)	J. Lubinsky (?-?)
Maurice Bonnevie (?-?)	Leo Franz Marquet (1902-?)	Olga Boone (1903-1992)				William Frédéric Padwick Burton (1886-1971)
Michel Styczynski (1886-1917)		Edmond Darteville (1907-1956)				

Apart from DRC, human remains of the AA collection come from Rwanda (12 records), Tanzania (6 records), Congo-Brazzaville (2) and finally there is a single entry for Kenia as well as for Germany. There are 41 fragmented bones and five jars of vertebrates donated in 1948 by a certain J. Lubinsky for whom no further biographical information was found. According to the correspondence in AA file 46 on this donation, these registrations consisted of skull and bone fragments. These were found by a certain Dr. Rasquinet doing a geological prospect in a cave in Lukala. The fragments should be part of at least 4 human beings. Furthermore, the origin

village was cited for these remains.¹ Further research should be done on this donation for a better historical understanding. The human remains from Rwanda count eight skulls and one fetus donated between 1922 and 1935 by a veterinarian Dr. René Van Saceghem (1884-1965), one skull donated in 1933 by the Belgian agricultural engineer Augustin Bequet (1899-1974) and one foetus donated in 1950 by the government doctor working at the medical centre Astrida, Dr. Alexandre Fain (1912-2009). Furthermore, the six skulls from Tanzania were donated by the commander Théodore Van de Heuvel (1846-1902), the two skulls from Congo-Brazzaville were donated in 1913 by a Dutch entrepreneur Elso Dusselje (1881-1964). The skull from Kenia was donated in 1913 by Dr. Léon Bayer (?-?), and that from Germany in 1931 by the Belgian herpetologist Gaston De Witte (1897-1980). The last entry, registered under the number 566 of a human skull, probably refers to a larger collection of archaeology and history Professor Jacques Nenquin (1925-2002) who collected approximately 118 skulls in a cave in Ruhengeri (Rwanda).

Other countries: Rwanda, Tanzania, Congo Brazzaville, Kenia, Germany						
Military expeditors	Colonial administrators	Scientific expeditors	International scientific staff	Medical staff	Missionaries	Entrepreneurs
Théodore Van de Heuvel (1846-1902)		Gaston De Witte (1897-1980)	Augustin Bequet (1899-1974)	René Van Saceghem (1884-1965)		Elso Dusselje (1881-1964)
		Jacques Nenquin (1925-2002)		Alexandre Fain (1912-2009)		
				Dr. Léon Bayer (?-?)		

1.2. Current collections at the RMCA

The RMCA currently has human remains in three collections dispersed over two departments and three sections. The department Cultural Anthropology and History includes different sections with corresponding collections that have changed throughout time: Ethnography (now part of ‘Heritage Studies’), Ethnomusicology (now part of ‘Culture and Society’), History (integrated in ‘History and Politics’), or Physical Anthropology which was disbanded in the 1960s but used to be part of the ancient section of ‘Prehistory and Anthropology’ (Personal

¹ Anatomie Anthropologie Lubinsky, 1948 (IRSNB, n° 46).

communication Els Cornelissen, November 2022). The human remains that were held in Physical Anthropology were, as previously mentioned, transferred to RBINs in 1964 and 1965. The department of Cultural anthropology and History still holds human remains in ethnographic collections and from an archaeological context. The scientific institute has, apart from the Department of Cultural anthropology and History, two other scientific departments: Earth Sciences and Biology with their corresponding collections. The biology department still holds human remains within the section of vertebrates in wet and dry collections (“Organisation chart of the RMCA | Royal Museum for Central Africa - Tervuren - Belgium,” n.d.). It is ethically contrary to the intentions of the HOME project and the trajectory of the RMCA to hold human remains. The reader should be warned, human remains were regarded as objects in the RMCA, as in many ethnography museums, throughout their trajectories within the museum.

Human remains that were conserved in alcohol were allocated to the wet collections of the biological department. In the biological collections, also listed as the Zoological and Vertebrate collections, 13 human remains were found in the inventory of vertebrates registered by Wim Wendelen between 2008 and 2016, and retrieved out of the DaRWIn data source system. Surprisingly, seven skulls, two brains and one embryo were cross-referenced in 2021 in this collection. Two entries of the AA-collection were re-registered in the biological collection and are still present at the RMCA. The first, is Prince Kapampa, taken by Émile Storms to Belgium and donated by his wife to the Congo museum (Musée du Congo) in 1935 (Roberts, 2019; Volper, 2021; Wastiau, 2017). Prince Kapampa was transferred to the biological department of the RMCA to the section of vertebrates in closet 5 in the mammalogy storeroom after they found him in the office of Dr. Jean-Sébastien Laurenty (1926-1996), an ethnographer and musicologist attached to the RMCA, in 1992 (Emmanuel Gillissen, personal communication, 8 July 2021). Throughout his career he was responsible for the description, inventorying and studying of the collection of musical instruments coming from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi (Laurenty, 1996). The second case is the most known of human remains preserved by the Africamuseum, namely, two mummified remains, registered in the general register of the AA collections under the entries AA 45 and AA 46 and entered in DaRWIn as a8.010-M-0004 and a8.010-M-0005. In 2003 and 2004, the RMCA sought to determine the exact origin of these mummified remains. The data from the scientific analyses located their origin in eastern Congo or Rwanda and indicated two middle-aged men. As the exact provenance remained unclear, no further steps were taken for repatriation (Van Neer, 2004). Today the mummified remains are stored in the ethnographical collections (Personal communication Siska Genbrugge, 18 April 2021). The provenance of the mummified remains has been fully clarified by Lies Busselen

throughout archival fieldwork in the State archives and the archive of the Royal Military Museum in Brussels in 2021 and 2022.

Human remains integrated in cultural objects were mostly allocated, loaned to or purchased by the ethnographical service. At the RMCA 22 human remains were registered as ethnographic objects throughout time, of which 18 have been physically cross-referenced, including the conservation of two mummified remains, registered in the AA and biological collections. Most of these human remains were purchased from private collectors and in five or six cases they are loans from the 1960s and 1970s from the Royal Museum of History and Art. The remaining human remains are ritual objects consisting of skulls and skull fragments. Specifically, they consist of 3 musical instruments made from 3 skulls and a necklace composed of skull fragments (presumably from 1 skull). Some human remains in this collection are kept in ritual baskets or were complemented by ritual objects, such as an ivory horn. The geographical provenance needs further investigation, although we can say with certainty that this collection has a more diverse character, with human remains from Oceania, South America (Columbia) and Africa (Gabon, Angola, New Guinea, DRC) acquired in the 1960s (1967-1969). On December 29 1967 the RMCA registered four skulls, one from Angola, two from Oceania and one from South America, and a mummy of a male child from South America in exchange (on loan) from the Royal Museums of Art and History (Lacaille and Gomez, 2011). Further archival research would be necessary to understand why this loan was organized that year. The same year a temporary exhibition on musical instruments from Oceania and Africa was organized on the occasion of the International Folk Music Council (Personal communication Maarten Couttenier, 25 November 2022). A number of human remains in the ethnographic collection were donated by well-known collectors, like Jef Van der Straeten and Emilé Déletaille, who donated two skulls, one from Columbia and one from New Guinea. These Belgian collectors are known for their collections of Oceanic, Colombian and African 'traditional' art (Haentjens, 2016).

In the archaeological collections there are 24 human remains consisting of either a single tooth fragment or an almost complete skeleton. Fifteen come from archaeological documented excavations, one fragment of a jaw with two teeth was collected from a natural layer during construction works and for eight the collection circumstances are unknown. For three of the latter the geographic location is known (2 skulls from Kabinda, DRC and 1 tooth fragment from Ruhengeri Rwanda) yet for the remaining five skulls the geographic origin is unretrievable. Eleven out of the 24 human remains have an RMCA inventory number and will need deaccessioning from the State property. Two skulls have no RMCA number but also no further

identification. The remaining eleven with no RMCA inventory number are all archaeologically excavated remains that were exported for detailed analysis. These can be returned at any time to the countries concerned. They are two probably neolithic skeletons from Jebel Uweinat, Libya. From Rwanda these are partial remains of 4 individuals found in 1973 during a survey at the site of Masangano. Another case concerns an individual from Murunda. A letter dated 6.1.1975 in the Archives AP 1554 by Abbé Rwagama explains that he had found “plusieurs vieilles tombes mises à jour par l'érosion” near the church and houses. For DRC some very fragmentary human bones were found in 1973 in three different Late Stone Age occupation levels at the cave site of Matupi (Van Neer, 1989, p.25). A skeleton was excavated at Sanga where numerous ancient graves dating to testify to the rich precolonial history in the region (Nenquin, 1963, pp. 142, 144). Possibly fragmentary human remains might be present in two soil samples in plaster encasements from the 1969-excavations at the Stone Age site of Kamoia, and a single tooth was found during the 1973-excavation of the top layer of a sequence running from the Stone Age into the early Iron Age at the cave of Dimba in 1973.

For each case study of the AA collections Lies Busselen conducted preliminary provenance research, as well separate reports have been written on the biological collections and collections from Rwanda. The Rwanda report in joint collaboration with our colleague Tara Chapman from RBINs. The research remains unfinished, due to time limitations and since no specific collaborations with homologues and concerned interlocutors could be developed for each case study in DRC or other source countries related to the collections. Further heuristic research on the ethnographic and archaeological collections in collaboration with partners in countries of origin would be recommended as well for these collections. During the public activities of the HOME project, both in the DRC and Belgium, awareness regarding these collections grew among a wider public. The reactions revealed a discrepancy between the legacy of these human remains as collection material in their current context and the ethical concerns and objections to further objectifying human remains.

2. Provenance as a part of the process

A revived debate on restitution and repatriation orients western research institutions, museums and universities towards a more profound institutional questioning of (post)colonial cultural heritage. In 2022 two reports on human remains saw the daylight: the scientific report on human remains published by an independent association Decolonize Berlin evaluating all the collections of human remains from colonial contexts in Germany and a guidance for ethical research on human remains in Norvegia (*Guidelines for Ethical Research on Human Remains*, 2022; Reimann et al., 2022). In 2021 Sarah Van Beurden has written about contested collections from former colonies in light of the Expert report for the special Commission charged with the examination of Belgium's colonial past. In this report she referred to human remains and the HOME-project (Beurden, 2021). In 2021 the National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands started a research project 'Pressing Matter' (2021-2025), which includes looted objects and possible solutions for human remains ("Pressing Matter: Ownership, Value and the Question of Colonial Heritage in Museums | Research Center for Material Culture," n.d.). The consideration of provenance on colonial collections of human remains in the European museumscape is growing throughout pilot projects, studies and policies year by year.

The beginnings of the HOME project in Belgium started long before 2019, when researchers Toma Luntumbue and Boris Wastiau actively questioned the collections during the temporary exhibition 'CongoExitMuseum' in 2001 (Wastiau, 2000). The art historian and curator Toma Luntumbue, and currently guest lecturer at Higher Institute for Fine Arts (HISK), stated in 2018 that he will never set foot again at the RMCA (Ceuppens and Luntumbue, 2018). Boris Wastiau became the director of the ethnographic museum of Geneva in February 2009 until February 2022.

Questions on human remains must have been raised earlier, in the context of demands for restitution of cultural heritage during the round table in 1960 and later in 1973, when president Mobutu Sese Seko (1971-1997) addressed the United Nations on the topic of restitution of colonial heritage (Isar, 2014, p. 45; Van Beurden, 2015, p. 16). The skull of the Iwa N'Gombe Lusinga was located by Boris Wastiau in 2005 and the story mediated in 2018 by Michel Bouffieux. The historical development of physical anthropology in Belgium, and the case of Iwa N'Gombe Lusinga had been studied in-depth by Couttenier (Couttenier, 2005). His research clarified and continues to clarify the entanglement between physical anthropology and the construction of collections of human remains from colonial contexts (Baloji and Couttenier, 2014; Couttenier, 2014, 2009a, 2009b, 2005). In 2012 members of the consultative committee

representing Congolese diaspora at the RMCA questioned the presence of human remains. Henry Mova Sakany, Congolese ambassador at the time, addressed the director of the RMCA for more information about human remains at the RMCA. In this letter he referred more precisely to the skull of Iwa 'N Gombe Lusinga and two mummified remains of Eastern DR Congo. They had apparently been seen by Albert Tuzolana, a member of the consultative committee COMRAF at the time.²

During a fiery debate at the colloquium 'From the dark into the light' organized at the ULB in 2019, the historian prof. Elikia Mbokolo (DRC) emphasised how Belgium would be overtaken by its colonial past, referring to the collections of human remains in Belgium (Braeckman, 2019; *Elikia M'Bokolo ULB 15 février*, 2019). Institutionally there was occasional concern for human remains in the collections at the RMCA, yet not in a systematic way by questioning the provenance of these remains. A first case study was the previously mentioned internal scientific research on the two mummified remains AA46 and AA47. This report presented a forensic analysis of the mummified remains (Van Neer, 2004). A second case was the publication of human remains in the ethnographic collections from a conservation perspective (Lacaille & Garcia-Gomez, 2011). Other European scientific institutions and museums holding collections of human remains from colonial contexts are thus confronted with omitted collections, when stating almost no provenance of human remains has been documented and recorded throughout time (Bendix and Kurzwelly, 2021; Kurzwelly, 2022; Redman, 2016, p. 60)

"Provenance" refers in the strict sense to "the history of ownership". This is traditionally assumed from the perspective of collection management in museums (Knoeff and Zwijnenberg, 2016; McKeown, 2013; Milosch and Pearce, 2019; Mooren and Stutje, 2022). A strict interpretation of provenance as a basis for the research on human remains, would discard the historical injustices in which human remains were removed. However, this definition exposes the current status of human remains as possessable objects. How to approach the provenance of these collections in respect of human rights and dignity remains a complex and much debated question (Fletcher et al., 2014; Onciul, 2015; Hicks et al., 2021; Kurzwelly, 2022). Another pitfall would be to limit provenance to acquisition information in museum archives. In many cases larger contextual understanding throughout written and oral sources, both in the countries of origin as in Belgium, brings provenance data to the foreground. Moreover, if we only include sources from the Belgian colonial archive for the provenance of collections of human remains, we keep on grasping colonial narratives (Dirks, 2002; Stoler, 2002, 2009; Hilden, 2022). A re-

² Henry Mova Sakany. (11/07/2012). [Lettre sur la découverte de restes humains à MRAC].

examination of these archives by colleagues in former colonial countries would allow them to produce “more accurate narratives of the colonial experience” (Gathara, 2019). People are carriers of their history. The use of oral tradition as a dynamic window to the past is indispensable in provenance research. It is a vital reminder of the unique perspectives on the past and present. As well, oral data from direct witnesses of the past should be taken into account in provenance processes (Vansina, 2006; Sommer and Quinlan, 2009). However, this should not slow down or block any processes of repatriation nor restitution. If geographical provenance is known on a country level any repatriation process of human remains can and should be able to start. The provenance research can accompany repatriation, which is the beginning of a larger process, demanding follow-up procedures and modalities, as for example remembrance practices, ceremonies and monuments, and possible provenance processes to consider the stories behind these so-called collections. The repatriation of Patrice Lumumba shows how any process of repatriation cannot be obstructed because of research. The judicial (and societal) follow-up of this process will ask for more contextual understanding beyond the more restricted provenance: in this case biological affiliation, which is not proven because of the destructive effects of DNA analysis, regarding the tooth.

When taking a closer look at the construction of these collections, we developed two approaches at the RMCA during the HOME project: (1) archival fieldwork applying heuristics, which can be read as a form of reading against and along the grain, in the colonial archive and (2) engaging into oral histories. Both approaches can be applied in Belgium and the countries of origin by social scientists and community builders. During the HOME project we studied different archival data concerning the donors, expeditors and the administration for the acquisition of human remains in Tervuren. In DRC the partners of the RMCA went into dialogue with more than 40 interlocutors on the stakes of collections of human remains in the present. Together with Lies Busselen, Dr. prof. Placide Mumbembele went in conversation with interlocutors in Feshi, concerning one case study of colonial agent Ferdinand Van de Ginste, which is 700 km from Kinshasa (for more precise info on this case go to 3.2).

2.1. Tying together archival data

The acquisition data found in the AfricaMuseum archives and the acquisition files of the AA collection conserved at RBINs were useful to see who was involved in the collection constitution process. Biographical information was collected in the memoriam-styled publication of the series *Belgian Colonial Biography* and the electronic available reference work *Biographical Dictionary of Belgians Overseas*, a (post)colonial historiographic instrument encompassing all the biographies of Belgians and non-Belgians that were active in the colony

(Vanthemsche, 2011, p. 218). When no biographical information was found in the Belgian Colonial Biography, for example in case of judicial proceedings against colonial agents or suicide of a colonial agent, we looked for further information in the AfricaMuseum Archives, the African archive of Belgian Foreign affairs and the State Archives in Brussels. Most biographical information was found in the personnel files of colonial agents in the State Archives. We only looked for the personnel files of the donors. Relations between donors and other actors central to the practices of collecting, reveal the historical and cultural contexts and circumstances behind these practices (Stoler, 2002, p. 88).

We also scrutinised personal funds at the archives of the University of Ghent, the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the institutional archive KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion Culture and Society at the KULeuven, and the military archive of the Royal Military Museum in Brussels. Different funds were consulted, as for example the fund of the anthropology Professor François Twiesselmann (1910-1999) who had an interest in anatomical anthropological research on fetuses in the 1940s (Leguebe and Orban, 1999, p.5-7). The fund of the criminology professor Frédéric Thomas (1906-1986) informs on his intention to purchase the collection of the colonial agent Ferdinand Van de Ginste in the 1950s. At the military museum the personnel file of a Belgian lieutenant Michel T.JA. Styczynski (1886-1917) yields more information on the mummified remains at RMCA. He was appointed sous-lieutenant in the Force Publique in Congo in 1915, and donated the two mummified remains to the Belgian Congo Museum during the first World War. Furthermore, the connections and relations within and between the colonial administration, donors and museum staff were researched mostly in the AfricaMuseum Archives combined with data from the Archives of Foreign Affairs and the State Archives. Next, we located a series related to the Belgian Congo Museum in the State Archives registered under the entry 'M17'. This series contains notes and correspondence concerning loans for exhibitions and two important cases, namely the collection of the colonial agent Ferdinand Van de Ginste and the mummified remains collected by the Belgian army in Rwanda.

In the archive of Belgian Foreign affairs we consulted various funds; of the General Governor (GG), of Indigenous affairs and Hand Labour (Affaires Indigènes et Main d'Oeuvre - AIMO) and the series of annual reports of the Kwango district in order to explore and register the archival logics of the colonial archive. We studied both the way these sources were constructed, as well as their content, what Stoler defines as "the move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject" (Stoler, 2002: 92). We have analysed these reports specifically for the Kwango district between 1940 and 1947 for the case of Fernand Van de Ginste. The reports contained data

related to territorial administration, which focused on colonial laws and decrees, levy taxes, recruit or mobilise workers, infrastructural investments, etc.

More Belgian institutions hold important archives regarding the activities related to the colonial collections of human remains in the former Belgian colony. We were not able to retrieve archival files and documents of the archives of defence, of the Royal Palace, of the cabinets and of certain enterprises (De Vriendt, 2022). Therefore, further and in-depth heuristic research on the institutional and informal networks of collectors or donors within the colonial archive is recommended.

2.2. Engaging into oral histories

During a study visit to DRC, Lies Busselen and Prof. Dr. Placide Mumbembele drove from Kinshasa to Feshi on 7 March 2022. Due to different shortcuts on sand roads with a national representative from Feshi, who took the time to talk to the people in the villages, the drive took almost 34 hours. One of the most remarkable encounters in Feshi was the meeting with Bruno Kembo Kombo (born in 1924) a man of 102 years of age. He was the clerk of Ferdinand Van de Ginste in Feshi during his tenure as territorial administrator (1940-1947). Bruno Kembo Kombo was held logistically responsible for a part of the Suku skull exhumations in 1945 and 1946 by Van de Ginste. He gave his personal account which corresponds to parts and bits of archival data, but this especially reveals how detailed these histories are remembered. Complex and sound perspectives on past situations and relations were shared. Kembo's account testified for example on the continuing violent effects of the unearthing of the ancestral remains nowadays in Feshi. During his testimony children and women from the neighbourhood followed his discourse with curiosity. Provenance is thus not solely a scientific process, but contributing to a societal process by enabling exchanges and confrontations between researchers, communities, community builders, descendants and other people concerned (Vansina, 2006).

Reaching out to a broad range of concerned interlocutors in the DRC regarding the collections of human remains in the HOME-project, opened up as well the importance to consider oral history in the provenance research process within HOME. Oral histories are produced through human contact, making them key to human-centred provenance research. Oral testimonies are dialectic tools. This does not mean that oral tradition is by nature less reliable than written sources, yet much like written texts, there is a constant enrichment and evaluation by their transmitters. Oral history depends on the memory/ies of those producing oral histories. When talking to people who are often not prevalent in written accounts of the past, and certainly not in colonial archives, we need to listen and consult counter accounts. Oral history is gathering

as well different forms of oral sources to process: interviews about the past, recordings of the past, informal testimonial accounts and other forms of oral data (Mulvihill and Swaminathan, 2022; Roberts and Brown, 1980). The way these data are gathered, processed and constituted is part of collaboration and dialogue. Most important is how the recognition of oral history is useful for memory healing when talking about human remains. Throughout these stories people can transmit their knowledge and be restored in their civil dignity. Oral history is in this sense not a supplement to historical research (Field, 2012). Furthermore, oral history invites larger parts of the communities to engage in conversations about the past. This can be very useful in reconciling with historical injustices. The case of Van de Ginste showed how the communities in Feshi still live the effects of past injustice and especially to help defuse tensions in the communities involved. This will be further explained and discussed in chapter three.

3. Identified and unidentified human remains

RMCA decided not to assess identified and unidentified human remains separately. Provenance research should be conducted regardless of their status of identification, though in some cases there was more provenance information on the personal identity of a human remaining available.

The reasons for this are multiple:

(1) The point of departure in the provenance research at the RMCA starts from cultural object biographies of the collections of human remains, perceived as objects throughout their trajectory (Kopytoff, 1986). Historically the colonial archive will only testify on this “life-part” of the human remain (“Conversation Piece: Necrography – Death-Writing in the Colonial Museum | Issue 19 - February 2021 | Issues | British Art Studies,” 2019). We cannot blur the assumption that human remains were perceived and continue to be treated as museum objects. Considering the collections of human remains as part of colonial epistemologies, the collectors were the starting points for the cultural biographies of the collections. We developed a draft document containing a continuing descriptive inventory in the form of short biographies, exploring the trajectories of these human remains and the circumstances in which they were collected for each donation of the AA and biological collections. This document attempts to address this gap, but more and collaborative research is needed to actually fill it.

(2) The general assumption is that poor provenance data show their limits and especially in the process of identification make it impossible to identify human remains. Thus, as previously mentioned, this complicates possible repatriation processes. There is a tendency to put an emphasis on the gaps (von Oswald, 2020, p. 119). In doing so the concept of identification limits the possibilities of looking at these collections in multiple ways in past and present. We suggest going beyond identification. Multi-sited research means reconstructing (object) biographies, including oral histories and researching the historical contexts, by looking at colonial administration, donors and their networks in multiple ways. Identification should be done in a collaborative approach.

(3) The identification of human remains in biological terms has been a main reference for bioforensic, bioarchaeological, osteoarchaeological and anthropological data management. It constitutes one of the most important starting points in valuing these collections in museums (Alves Cardoso, 2018; Licata et al., 2020). The concept of biological identification is closely related to considering human remains as continuous scientific objects resulting in perhaps less concern for uncontested and “forgotten” human remains (Jenkins, 2010: 117). The premise of

identification reinforces as well the scientific discourse and value of these human remains. While it may apply as a valuable research orientation, especially in case of requests, this alienates us from the systemic historical violence behind collecting practices and management in museums. Another interesting response to this within the disciplines of bio-archeology and physical anthropology focuses on how violence has been embodied in human remains, as many injuries or abnormalities reveal racial or gender related experiences (Zuckerman et al., 2021). This young research field departs from the premise of ‘structural violence’ in colonial contexts.

(4) However, the “victims” should from an ethical and moral viewpoint be central to the research on colonial collections. This should be recognised in collaboration with interlocutors from source countries, communities, families and descendants. Less could be the case in the present dialogue with source countries, when inventories and classifications according to Belgian epistemologies are presented. Related names and/or related communities have been clarified where possible on each case study, but remain troubling and “historically situated artefacts”, if not confronted or discussed in a present dialogue with source interlocutors (von Oswald, 2020: 115).

3.1. Results and perspectives of provenance research

We conducted multi-sited research on different cases by studying geographical data, archival data, literature and by looking at concerned historical parties and networks in the DRC in the archives and out in the field (Marcus, 1999).³ The inventory research evoked the question of (1) the limitations of provenance research and (2) the pragmatic and ethical challenges of reproducing 19th and early 20th century museum categories. As we explained in the first chapter a complete inventory has not been realistic. Inventories reproduce questionable categories today. Therefore the inventory must be seen as a basic first step of research in a larger and more sustainable provenance process. Shared research with permission of and in collaboration with countries and communities of origin could possibly complete so-called blind spots in the inventory for identifiable and unidentifiable individuals.

The RMCA considers all human remains in collections and wants to share as much of the existing and stated provenance information for each of the human remains in each collection. Consequently, personal names remain inevitable references for possible future dialogues and collaborations with and within source countries. Identification of human remains is an important point of debate, since for example different institutions in Germany still refuse to

³ For more information on the conducted research and methodologies we recommend chapter 2.

share the identification of their collections (Reimann et al., 2022, p. 14). Therefore we refer to the following case studies taking the donated person and donor/collector as a starting point of this open-ended process:

Chief Mamboukou removed by lieutenant Alphonse Cabra (1861-1932) from Tsimbangu to Tervuren

The case of the colonial lieutenant Alphonse Cabra who ‘donated’ the skull of a Mayombe chief, registered under entry AA 15. After he contributed to the inauguration of the railway line in Congo Free State in 1896, Alphonse Cabra was designated for a scientific mission to the Mayombe region. During a month and a half he collected geological samples, objects and human remains in 1897 in the Mayombe region (Robyns, 1952; Liben, 1977). Cabra donated at least seven human skulls and two donations of bones, with entries AA 11 until AA 17 and AA 21 to the museum after his missions, respectively in 1897, 1904 and 1909. The human bones with entries AA 13 and AA 14 should, according to the general register, be related to the human skulls with entries AA 11 and AA 12.

Entry AA 15 could possibly refer to the identity of a person. The description begins with “crâne du chef du Mayombe”. Although around a dozen chiefs were seated in the Mayombe region, thus the label ‘chef du Mayombe’ does not specify the identity of a person. However, the human skull was as well accompanied by a label mentioning ‘Chef Mamboukou’. According to the description in the register he had been killed during a palaver in May 1896 and was deterred again on the first of february 1897. In February and March 1896 there was a military operation by a detachment of the Force Publique in that area, but very little is known about it. The reports were never found. It could be possible this archive was destroyed on orders from Leopold II (Hein Van Hee, personal communication, August, 12, 2020). The palaver, which initially refers to a discussion with a chief on the part of the expeditionaries, takes on a macabre form here by revealing itself to be the origin of a murderous conflict. The word ‘palabre’, which refers to the tradition of conflict resolution, was appropriated by colonial officials at the time as an euphemism for violent (unequivocal) conflicts (Bidima, 2014, p. 30-31). Cabra had found the remains of Chief Mamboukou in the village of Tsimbangu in 1901 and donated the skull to RMCA on the 3rd of January in 1903. His skull has however not been found in the RMCA nor at RBINs. His skull had no teeth and missed the inferior jaw bone, according to the general register. On the skull was encrypted the number 19 instead of the number 15, under which he had been registered in the inventory. The skull was part of the public exhibition of the Musée

du Congo until 1959, and probably removed from public display in that same year.⁴ The remains of the chief must have been in storage for 4 years before all human remains from the Anatomic Anthropological collection were transferred to RBINs in 1964. Although the AA File is stored at RBINs, the skull of ‘Chef Mamboukou’ did not arrive at RBINs in 1964 and might still be in the RMCA (Personal communication Tara Chapman and Maarten Couttenier, 8 October, 2020). Although no skull with the number 19 encrypted was found, chief Mamboukou might be one of the non-identified skulls in the biological collections at the RMCA.

Traditional chiefs Lusinga Iwa Ng’ombe, Malibu and Prince Kapampa removed by Emile Storms (1846-1918) from Mpala to Tervuren

The case of the colonial lieutenant Émile Storms who beheaded the much debated chief Lusinga Iwa Ng’ombe of the Tabwa people from the northwest of Mpala and brought his skull to Belgium as well as the skull of Prince Mpampa or Kapampa of the Bemba community from the village Uriro, and that of Chief Malibu (spelled ‘Maribou’ by Storms) of the Marungu people from the South of Mpampa (Bouffieux, 2018; Couttenier, 2005; Roberts, 2012; Volper, 2021). The skull of Prince Kapampa has been found in the section of vertebrates at the RMCA in February-March 2021 in depot closet 5. The skulls of Chief Malibu and Chief Lusinga, registered respectively under AA 149 and AA 151 are located on trays AF45 and AF51 in RBINs. The research and publications by historian and social anthropologist Maarten Couttenier, anthropologist Allen Roberts, art historian Julien Volper and journalist Michel Bouffieux on Iwa Ng’ombe Lusinga continue to serve as a learning practice for multi-sited research on other cases and enabled the next step in the provenance (research) process in the DRC. The art centre Waza in Lubumbashi organized several consultations with different interlocutors involved and developed an expertise in field consultations and community-based exchange practices concerning the Lusinga case study. Waza is in contact with representatives of the Tabwa community and of the Murumbi research group at the University of Lubumbashi. Thierry Lusinga, one of the descendants of Lusinga had been asked in 2021 to be part of the focus group composed by Waza. They established an interview with a representative of the academic Tabwa group ‘Murumbi’ in 2021, but Thierry Lusinga declined further interviews in 2022. One of the WAZA-partners, Joseph Kasau, curator and visual artist, has roots in Mpala and may easily continue his cultural research on this case study. This shows the importance and future possibilities of multi-sited and collaborative research.

⁴ Anthropologie Anatomique Cabra, 1903 (Archives RBINs, n°1).

The case of Chief Lusinga stands in contrast to other cases as it is thoroughly known, studied and publicly discussed. The research started four decades ago when Allen Roberts did fieldwork among the Tabwa. The interest grew because the historical context became more clear and known throughout the years. Boris Wastiau showed an interest in early 2000 for the skull of Lusinga during his broader questioning of the colonial collections at the AfricaMuseum together with artist and lecturer Toma Luntumbue, for the temporary exhibition “ExitCongoMuseum” (Wastiau, 2000). In 2005 Maarten Couttenier published his PhD dissertation on the historical background of physical anthropology in Belgium. One of the case studies he researched was the provenance and historical context of the murder of Lusinga and how his skull served physical anthropological research (2012). Afterwards, Lusinga has been the object of internal dispute at the RMCA in 2012, when Albert Tuzolana, a member of COMRAF at the time said he had seen the skull of Lusinga and asked for repatriation (Busselen, 2012).⁵ The possible return of chiefs Lusinga, Malibu and Kapampa to the DRC became a more obvious end destination in subsequent discourse and publications (Roberts, 2019). The Belgian journalist Michel Bouffiaux dedicated a whole website to this goal: <https://www.lusingatabwa.com/>. As Bouffiaux reported, Thierry Lusinga Ng'ombe requested in a letter in October 2018 to the Belgian King and State to return the remains of his forefather to DRC in order to organize a dignified burial (2019). Since this official request by one of the descendants, a platform of scientists from the University of Lubumbashi, called ‘Groupe Murumbi’, continues to develop a request for collective restitution, actively involving representatives of the Tabwa community.

Dignitaries Bene and Amakeo removed by Marcel Maenhout (1888-1972) from Irumu to Tervuren

The colonial agent Marcel Maenhout van Lemberge⁶ exhumed the dignitary Bene and a noble woman Amakeo in the presence of the second chief Apawanza Sisanionge of the Walese community on 27 February 1936. According to the judicial reports found the AA file 34 Bene was exhumed on the Romvu hill, in the cheffery of Walese Vonkutu at Irumu, the sub-chiefdom of the Befwalu. Amakeo was exhumed on the Dodo ground near the Mabasu falls of the Mambasa cheffery. Their exhumation took place in the presence of a sous-chef who belonged to a different clan of dignitaries. Apayembe was a third person who was exhumed and reburied the same day on 27 February 1936. According to the sous-chef Apawanza was a child of 5 to 6

⁵ Heny Mova Sakany. (11/07/2012). [Lettre sur la découverte de restes humains à MRAC].

⁶ Marcel Maenhout van Lemberge (AGR2, SPA. Fonds colonie, Minicol, 19621).

years old, buried on the 23th August 1931. Due to the poor state of preservation of the child's bones, it was reburied in the same place. This also happened with the exhumation of a fourth individual, named Baite. Her body was found decomposed at a depth of 1.30 m. Since the recovery of a skeleton in the soggy ground was impossible, they gave up the operation. Based on the testimonies of the representatives Baite died while giving birth to a twin and was buried with these two children on a bed of branches and leaves.⁷

On 23 December 1936 the skeletons of Bene and Amakeo were transmitted together with casts of different body parts of Amakeo and different iron objects, probably as grave gifts, to the Section of Anthropology and Prehistory. Further research in the archeological collections of the RMCA might shed light onto these donations of Maenhout and his relation to the museum at the time.

On 21 December 1937 they were sent to Vienna for examination by the Austrian anthropologist Dr. Victor Lebzelter (1889–1936), an Austrian anthropologist opposing Nazi race theory. After the sudden death of Dr. Lebzelter they were sent to the Anthropological Section of the National Museum of Prague (Schebesta, 1933; “Viktor Lebzelter,” 2022). There they were studied by the Czech anthropologists Jindrich Magtiegka and Jiri Maly who also studied four skeletons of so-called Pygmies of Ituri. In their publication they refer to the unearthed skeletons from entries AA 207 and AA 208 (Malý and Matiegka, 1938). The colonial-era term ‘Pygmy’ refers to equatorial rainforest people of Central-Africa who have been the object of intensive research because of their stature. The term evokes racial labelling, charged with cultural and social inflictions. The closest term is the term they use to appoint themselves, namely ‘forest people’ which is the spelling ‘BaAka’ used in Central-Africa (Ballard, 2006; Kisliuk, 2010; Laden, 2012).

On the 27th of August 1937 Bene and Amakeo were returned to the Section of Anthropology and Prehistory of the Musée du Congo together with a series of 17 casts of the skeletal elements registered with entry AA 208 and registered under the entry AA 214 in the AA collections. In 1940 Dr. Jadin published in the *Annales of the Royal Institution of Colonial Belgium* a study on the sanguine groups (blood types) entitled “Les groupes sanguins pygmoides et des nègres de la province Équatoriale (Congo Belge)”. In this report Jadin also describes the organisation of the expedition in the Ituri forest and recounts the habits and customs of “Pygmies”, focusing on their hygiene and particular diseases (Dubois and Jadin, 1937; Jadin, 1936; Leiris, 1935).

⁷ Anatomie anthropologique Maenhout, 1936 (Archives RBINs, n°34).

Moreover 12 individuals removed Armand Hutereau (1875-1914) from Uele to Tervuren

The first class commander of the Force Publique and expeditor for the Museum of Congo, Armand Hutereau (1875-1914) donated human remains of at least 12 individuals in 1912. He collected more than 8000 ethnographic objects during the Hutereau expedition by the instructions of the Ministry of Colonies for the 'Museum of Congo' from 1911 to 1913. Joseph Armand Hutereau was a first class commander of the Force publique. He first went to Congo Free State in 1886. During his different missions in Africa Hutereau always showed military interest in customs and habits of the local population. After working as a military agent Hutereau on different missions in Congo Free State he was appointed by the Ministry of Colonies to execute an ethnographic scientific mission to Uele (Engels, 1950). These human remains were accompanied with extensive provenance information, when looking closely into the archival documents related to Hutereau in the AfricaMuseum Archives.

Three skulls could be identified to some extent: a chief, labelled 'Momfu' with entry AA 26, which is probably 'Mamfu' and refers to the head of a local community (Hutereau, 1922); Memili from the Azande people with entry AA 24 collected in the village Aparambo; Makere, which may refer to the population of the region, with entry AA 25 and, found nearby Niapu at the village of the Azande chief Zokere; and finally the skull of Memili Boro collected in the village of chief Bafuka, with entry AA 39.⁸ Skull with entry AA 26 is probably the only female skull labeled 'Momfu' in the general register. The word 'momfu' is actually written correctly 'mamfu' and refers to the head of a local community (Hutereau, 1922). The skulls registered under the numbers 27 to 31 were described as male Azande. According to the general register, numbers 24 and 25 were both from the region of Uele, where Hutereau collected and assembled his collection during his mission, and were donated to the Congo museum in 1912. Although the donor is not mentioned in the general register, these skulls were probably part of the Hutereau donations of human remains. Entry 24 carries number 362 and refers to the skull of the identified individual named Memili from the Azande. The skull was collected in the village Aparambo (Jangare) according to the collection slip of acquisition file 244 of the Hutereau mission (*Ethnographic File N° 244*, 1912, p. 6). Entry 25 is linked to consignment 413 and describes the skull is to be of 'Makere' found nearby Niapu at the village of the Azande chief Zokere at the Westside of the post Poko, according to the same acquisition file of the Hutereau mission (*Ibid*, p. 5). 'Makere' could refer in this context to the population of the region Makeret.

⁸ Ethnographic file n°298, 1912: 67 (AfricaMuseum Archives, Mission Hutereau, 1912-14, AA.1.-N.13).

Niapu is a place in the center of the region of Makeret indicated on an ethnographical map made by Armand Hutereau (*Map by Dr Joseph Maes outlining the journey of the expedition of Commander Hutereau* © RMCA, HO.1987.18.122). Both skulls 24 and 25 were transferred from Léopoldville on 8 February 1912 to the Congo museum according to a letter from the Director of the company of Industry and Commerce to the Ministry of Colonies (Ernst, 1912).

During a verification of the collection, the teeth of Bikitiki, a chief from the village of Nekbengué, with entry AA 38 were identified in RBINs on tray AF61. It could be that the name of the chief was misspelled. According to the acquisition file (number) the teeth were collected from the person *Tikitiki* who was killed during battle.⁹ Further research and collaboration is needed to reconstruct the biography or contextualize Tikitiki as a chief. There might in fact be a link between the teeth AA 38 and an identified person carrying number 3/43. The latter entry is described as “dents de Pygmée "Bikitiki" id. village de chef Nekbengué (Momfu) 3/43 Nom indigène Uele” in the General Register. It was also found on tray AF61 in RBINs. In acquisition file 298 of the mission of Hutereau these teeth are described as the teeth of “tikititi” from the village of Chef Nekbengué. Probably “bikitiki” was a spelling error. According to the information in the acquisition file the teeth were collected from a certain Tikitiki who was killed during battle. The number 298 of the acquisition file was listed in AA file 13 accompanied by notes including various measurements, descriptions of cranial structures and diagrams.¹⁰

The skull with entry 39 carries the number 4/249 and is referred to as a Zande skull, named “Memili Boro” and collected in the village of chief Bafuka according to the ethnographic file 298 of the Hutereau mission. Skull number 40 was referred to as a Zande skull, carrying the number 4/250 and donated by chef Bwalu at the Sili post according to the same file. Both skulls 39 and 40 were transported from the post of Amadis Bambili to Léopoldville. The package left Léopoldville on the 19th of December 1912 according to a second letter from the general vice-governor Henry Cornelis to the minister of Colonies Jules Renkin (1912)¹¹. For her doctoral research (2016-2021), anthropologist Hannelore Vandenberghe investigated the Hutereau collection, from the perspective of the Congolese chief Maroka. The aim is to shed new light on early twentieth-century colonial collecting practices. Her research shows how contemporary accounts can compel and enrich an open-ending provenance process (“Early twentieth-century colonial collecting practices scrutinised,” n.d.).

⁹ Ethnographic file N°298, 1912:2 (AfricaMuseum Archives, Mission Hutereau, 1912-14, AA.1.-N.13).

¹⁰ Anatomie anthropologique Hutereau, 1912 (Archives RBINs, n°13).

¹¹ Ethnographic file n°298, 1912: 68 (AfricaMuseum Archives, Mission Hutereau, 1912-14, AA.1.-N.13).

Three violated cemeteries by Fernandus Van de Ginste in 1945-1946 (1912-1947)

Lies Busselen has studied under supervision of Maarten Couttenier the AA files and looked closely into the case of Van de Ginste. This case concerns at least 230 “unidentifiable” individuals, from entries AA 238 to AA 451, deterred between 1941 and 1947 in the Kwango district. His collection arrived in the museum shortly after his suicide (7 March 1947) in Belgian Congo on 30 August 1947 in Tervuren. The collection counts 189 skulls, 39 skull fragments, 4 bones (probably part of certain skulls) and 10 teeth to be associated with the skulls between entries AA 237-248, according to the general register of the AA collections. The museum had first been in contact with Van de Ginste about his collection of skulls in 1946.

The human remains collected by Van de Ginste represent approximately 45% of the AA collection. Eleven records refer to the acronym “B.K.” (AA 241- 246, AA 248 and AA 254-56) and 1 registration to Buka Kipangu, namely under the entry AA 247. Another skull with entry AA 238 has the name Buka-Tsona written on it and the acronym “B.T.” This is also present on the skulls with entries AA 239 and AA 240. Buka is a city center in the Kwango district at a distance of 547 km from the former and current administrative center Feshi. Six skulls bear a reference to the locality Ganaketi in the territory of Feshi, 60 km to the north-east in a straight line from Feshi. On March the 8th and 9th 2022 Lies Busselen and Placide Mumbembe conducted fieldwork in Feshi, but there was no time left to go to Ganaketi and Buka. According to different testimonies in Feshi, the grave violations took place in the localities of Bwangongo, Bukatsona, Masengu and Menikongo at the end of the Second World War in 1945 (Personal communication, Bruno Kembo Kombo, 8 mars 2022).

During his first contacts with the Congo museum, Van de Ginste explained to the ad-interim museum director Floribert Duchesne that he would like to excavate graves in cemeteries. His letter was positively received.¹² After his sudden death the museum director Duchesne contacted the Minister of Colonies Robert Godding on the 18th March 1947 to ensure the transmission of the collections of Van de Ginste to the Congo museum. The colonial administration secured and guaranteed the conveyance of the hundred of skulls and other human remains to the Congo museum in the summer months of 1947.¹³

¹² Lettre ‘Collection 200 crânes Basuku’ de Ferdinand Van de Ginste à Floribert Duchesne, 25 septembre 1946 (Archives Africaines, AIMO (1580) 9053).

¹³ File with correspondence between direction and Van de Ginste (AfricaMuseum Archives, I. Coordination Gestion de collection, 1898 - 1989, AA 2. D2. 1947).

Maurice Bequaert, at the time in charge of the Section of Prehistory and Anthropology, meticulously noted various data concerning Van de Ginste in terms of context and conditions of the grave violations and the probable scientific value of these collections. In this respect his correspondence with Father Lamal, who published two years after the death of Van de Ginste, a population study on the Basuku in 1949 (Lamal, 1949) is very informative.¹⁴

Lies Busselen has contacted Robert Eugene Smith, an independent researcher interested in oral history as historic sources and who was a teacher in the Kwango district in the 1980 ties. In his spare time he carried out historical research on the colonial past (“Robert E. Smith - Oxford Bibliographies,” n.d.). He interviewed Congolese in the Kituba language in the Due and Kwilu Secteurs of Bulungu Territoire in 1966 and 1976, and in Bindungi Secteur of Masi-Manimba Territoire in 1981 and 1986. He published part of these interviews in the paper “Les Kwilois parlent de l’époque coloniale” (Smith, 2005). Thanks to these exchanges it became clear that Van de Ginste had a reputation and surname, which was very useful when Lies Busselen had the opportunity to travel to Feshi with Placide Mumbembele in March 2022. His surname wai-wai, waia-waia or way-way referred to a repressive character, which was confirmed as well in a second personal file of Van de Ginste at the State Archives.¹⁵ When administrators carried surnames given by the population often this was an expression of resistance on a local level. The surnames were representations of the situation from a local viewpoint (Likaka, 2009).

Mummified human remains from Rwanda at the AfricaMuseum

In 2001, the AfricaMuseum made the press several times on two mummified people that are preserved there to this day. The press spoke of 'mummies', but research has pointed out in the meantime that their mummification has been a natural and not intentional process, therefore we speak of mummified people. They were registered as a8.010-M-0004 and a8.010-M-0005 in the biological collections. Before that they had also been recorded as AA-46 and AA-47 in the anatomical anthropological collections of the AfricaMuseum. Today the museum accommodates the mummified people in a respectable manner at the C.A.P.A. (Centre Accueil Personnel Africain) building in Tervuren. Because of their poor provenance information and unidentifiable ethnic origins, they were not transferred to the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in 1964 and remained in the AfricaMuseum (“Persdossier KMMA: Laatste expo voor de renovatie,” 2011). The mummified humans appeal to the imagination, since so little is known about them by the Belgian public. Although mummies are in general a main attraction for bigger

¹⁴ Anatomie Anthropologie Van de Ginste, 1947 (IRSNB, n° 45).

¹⁵ Dossier personnel Ferdinandus-Arthur Van de Ginste (AGR2, SPA. Fonds Métropole, n°4697).

audiences, the AfricaMuseum never put them on display (Jenkins, 2010). With research conducted for the HOME project, we hope to offer some elements for a demystification of their presence. In 2003, a multidisciplinary study consisting of isotope analysis, pollen research, radiocarbon dating, physical measurements and historical testimonies was initiated under the direction of biologist Wim Van Neer, then head of the Vertebrates department at the AfricaMuseum. The aim was to determine the exact origin of the two mummified people. According to the researchers, they might be the remains of two male herders/pastoralists from the Kivu region that arrived at the museum in the 1930s. Because the exact provenance remained unclear, no further steps were taken to repatriate these human remains (Van Neer, 2004). The original assumption in the report's conclusions was that the mummified people lived in the late 1930s. They were possibly from a cave in the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The information from the pollen analysis confirmed that the environment in which they were found is similar to that in the eastern region of the DRC. The mummification of both people is similar to the natural mummification of animals found on the Mikeno volcano in Kivu, based on the reading of a publication on birds in Congo (Chapin et al., 1953). Physical anthropological research assumed that both mummified humans were probably men of about 30 and 45 years of age. Compared to people from the Horn of Africa, Rwanda and South-Central Congo, they may have been closer to Rwandan communities, according to the report. Radiocarbon dating gave an estimated time of death between 1660 and 1960. Isotope analysis on their teeth revealed that they were carnivores and thus would rather have been pastoralists than farmers (Van Neer, 2004). Within the HOME project new evidence was found in the State Archives, located in the Hopstreet in Brussels. The military report "Expédition de deux momies trouvées par les troupes coloniales à Tshandjarue, 1916" is part of the documentation folder *M17 Objets transmis (ou renseignés) au Musée par l'Administration d'Afrique*, concerning objects transferred by the colonial administration to the Congo museum (belge). According to this newly located source, Belgian troops under the command of Officer Defoin of the *Force Publique* found the two mummified people on November 30 1915 at the opening of a volcanic crater (Stiénon, 1918: 62). This happened during their military campaign that they had started from East to Central Africa at the time of the First World War. The two persons were found in Rwanda on Mount Tshandjarue, according to the report of Styczynski, a few hundred kilometres from the Mikeno mountain chain previously mentioned.¹⁶ Styczynski started as a grenadier at the warfront in 1914 and, after being wounded, was appointed sous-lieutenant in the Force Publique in Congo in 1915. On April 12th 1915, Styczynski started his career in the

¹⁶ M17 Objets transmis (ou renseignés) au Musée par l'Administration d'Afrique (ARA2, MiniCol, °132).

Belgian Congo.¹⁷ The military report is undated, but it is attached to a letter from the general governor to the Ministry in London on the 29th of July 1916. From his personal file we know that Styczynski left Congo for Belgium one month later. Presumably, Styczynski located the Belgian troops on mountain Tshandjarue in the aftermath of the battle, found both mummified remains whilst he was there and wrote the report not long after the battle at the end of 1915. Today, the Tshandjarue mountain is called Cyanzarwe according to the geologist Francois Kervyn de Meerendré, Head of Natural Hazards & Cartography Service at the RMCA (Personal communication, 27 June 2022). However, the name Tshandjarue can be found on a map from 1948 of the then Albert National Park, today Virunga Park (“Congo Belge et Ruanda-Urundi,” 1948). This mountain is located 12 km north of Lake Kivu. Only a few days before, on 27 November 27th 1915, a devastating battle against German soldiers had taken place there. Almost all soldiers of the Belgian company lost their lives that day (Ergo, n.d.). The battalion was led by lieutenant Defoin and general major Charles Tombeur (1867-1947), known as “Baron Tombeur de Tabora”, who took Tabora on 19 september 1916 (Dellicour, 1968). Probably, the two mummified remains were removed when the bodies of the fallen soldiers were collected.

Based on the data in the general register of the AA-collections at the RMCA, the Belgian lieutenant Michel T.J.A. Styczynski (1886-1917) would have donated the mummified remains to the museum in 1919. However, according to the M17 file, the mummified remains left Belgian Congo in 1916 and were sent to the British Museum in London on the 21st of August 1916 at the request of the Minister of Colonies Jules Renkin (1862-1934). At that time, the Belgian government stayed in London pending the end of the war. In 1919, the mummified remains were transferred to the Congo museum at Tervuren without further explanation. Edouard De Jonghe (1878-1950), became the brand new director of the cabinet of the Ministry of Colonies. He had a particular interest in colonial ethnography and was in contact with the British Museum (Schampaert, 2012).¹⁸ On the 28th of August 1919, he referred to the post-war transfer of 29 acquisitions, which had been at the British Museum during the war.¹⁹ Probably the mummified remains were returned from the British Museum, but until now no data was found on this post-war acquisition.

¹⁷ Personal military file Michel T.J.A.Styczynski (Cdoc. KLM-MRA, DO 11912).

¹⁸ Registre Anthropologie Anatomique (Archives Africamuseum, Section d’Archéologie et préhistoire, 1897 –
auj, D.A.10.11).

¹⁹ Dossiers coordination période 1910-1931 (Africamuseum Archives, AA 1.A.1919).

In his military report, Styczynski, gave a description of the location, the mummified people and of their state of preservation. According to him, they were a man and a woman, one with a skull and the other without. He also describes how difficult it was for the Belgian troops to estimate the timing of the volcanic eruption that would have trapped them in the cave and why these people were inside the crater in the first place. Styczynski hypothesized that the people probably farmed on the mountain massif and sought shelter in the cave from the eruption.²⁰ According to the 2004 scientific report, the people were mummified naturally by a volcanic eruption.

Although Styczynski ascribed so-called Watuzi ethnic features to the mummified remains, when they were compared throughout MT-scans and craniological measurements with the Rwandan collections of RBINs for the scientific report coordinated by Wim Van Neer in 2003 and 2004. The conclusions were twofold, on the one hand a so-called racial origin was not identifiable and, on the other hand, their similarity to Rwandan human remains pointed to a likely location on the Rwandan side of the mountain chain. collections of the Bahutu showed how Rwanda housed the necessary conditions for the conservation of these remains (Van Neer, 2004).

After retracing provenance data in the colonial archive more data can be clarified. This results inevitably in descriptive provenance case studies, lacking of analysis and different perspectives on the historical context in which human remains were removed, but no stories or contextual information of source communities or descendants are discussed, nor valorized. This is why collaboration is indispensable in further provenance processes.

²⁰ M17 Objets transmis (ou renseignés) au Musée par l'Administration d'Afrique (ARA2, MiniCol, °132).

4. Challenging collaborations in a changing museumscape

In a shifting museumscape the awareness to encourage contact zones with conversations and exchanges with interlocutors of and in countries of origin in museums is growing fast in these “times of the curator”, as Clifford puts it (2019). For the HOME project the RMCA prioritised this throughout multivocal partnerships in the DRC. The exchange and/or conversation has been institutionally integrated in the project throughout partnerships in the DRC and an informal civil society group with a high representation of the Congolese diaspora in Belgium. Inevitably, (the perception of) the RMCA as biased influenced the collaborations. The RMCA established, however, throughout this process new and restored old relations in the DRC and Belgium. For the partners an exceptional opportunity occurred, namely the possibility to cause movement outside narrow disciplinary boundaries (Costache and Kunny, 2021, p.14-15). These practices in relation to the historical heritage of the RMCA brought many frictions and paradoxical dynamics to the fore, but also facilitated change in an inherently asymmetric contact zone (Boast, 2009). The informal civil society work group in Belgium challenged the institutional boundaries and actively questioned the presence of human remains out of colonial contexts during the HOME project.

The collaboration consisted of different activities and performances with Congolese partners in the DRC and in Belgium and representatives of the civil society in Belgium. Due to the pandemic and complicated visa situation for the DRC the study visit of the Congolese partners could only be organized at the very end of the project in October and November 2022. The relatively short duration of the project did not allow for in-depth cocreation and interaction between DRC partners and civil society partners in Belgium. This implies that collaborative reporting has not been feasible and the report below on behalf of the RMCA team is in need of further elaboration and consent prior to publishing.

4.1. Partnerships and agreements in the DRC

In its original concept the HOME-project would provide for a series of visits from and to Belgium and DRC, Rwanda and Burundi to identify and meet with interlocutors in the concerned countries in order to listen to the local opinions on restitution and/or repatriation. The DRC was especially an important source country since more than 85% of the colonial collections of human remains come from the DRC. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic a collaborative and network-oriented approach at distance was implemented. This was the start of several partnerships with Congolese interlocutors.

The RMCA established three partnerships in September 2020. Firstly a collaboration was discussed with an group of documentary filmmakers, Collective Faire-Part (CFP) in Kinshasa, and with a cultural centre, playing a central role in the public restitution debate in the DRC, Centre d'Art Waza (Waza) in Lubumbashi.²¹ We also established at an early stage in 2020 collaborating with Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembe, anthropologist and restitution expert from the DRC. . On 26 October 2021, he was appointed general director of the Institute of National Museums (Institut des Musées nationaux du Congo, IMNC) in the DRC o. This added an interesting and re-enforcing institutional dimension to the partnership between the RMCA and the IMNC at the end of 2021 and in early 2022.

The cultural partners CFP and Waza had experience and expertise regarding restitution of cultural objects, a topic which is considerably related to the topic of repatriation of human remains. Most of them had previous and sometimes long standing experience of collaboration with the RMCA. This to some extent mitigated the lack of direct contact.

Placide Mumbembe holds a PhD in political and social sciences entitled 'Les musées, témoins de la politique Culturelle, de l'époque coloniale à nos jours' from the Belgian ULB. His scientific residency at the RMCA in 2021 focused on the provenance of Yaka masks . He developed an argued discourse on restitution and participated in several public events concerning the restitution of cultural patrimony. In July 2021 he gave a Museum talk organized by the RMCA on provenance research concerning the ethnographic collections (*Placide Mumbembe - Recherche de provenance*, 2021). He argued that the focus should shift from the museum as a site of locus to the source communities. He emphasized the perpetuation of culture throughout cultural objects within local communities, even throughout iconoclastic histories (Mumbembe, 2020).

Patrick Mudekereza is the artistic director of Waza. He had informal discussions in 2016 regarding collections of human remains with anthropologist Dr. Maarten Couttenier, promotor for the RMCA of the HOME-project, paleoanthropologist Patrick Semal, Principal Investigator of the HOME project and co-opted senator Bert Anciaux and former representative of the Socialist party sp.a in Belgium. These discussions were attended by Prof. André Yoka Lye, at the time general director of the National Institute of Arts in Kinshasa. Waza organized together with the German Goethe Institut "Les Musées en Conver(sa)tion, perspectives congolaises sur la restitution des biens culturels et la transformation des pratiques muséales en Afrique" in

²¹ <https://www.centredartwaza.org/>
<https://www.collectif-fairepart.com/>

Kinshasa in October 2018 (“RDC,” 2018). During this conference the restitution of human remains was evoked as well, notably by Dr. Prof. Sarah Van Beurden (Personal communication Patrick Mudekereza, 20 July 2020). The former director of the RMCA Guido Gryseels participated in these discussions. Within the framework of “Voix Contemporaines Echos Mémoires (VCEM)” a second event was organized in December 2018 in Brussels, on transforming museum practices in Africa (“Table Ronde,” n.d.). In June 2020 Patrick Mudekereza was invited to participate at a four-day colloquium on the reconstitution of cultural patrimony to the DRC, attended by political representatives, academia and cultural operators. The topic of restitution was discussed, but needed to be part of the broader challenge of the “reconstitution” of Congolese patrimony (Beurden, 2021). A delegation of Belgian participants was invited to participate at this colloquium (*Kinshasa*, 2021).

The filmmakers of CFP produced a documentary ‘In many Hands’ (40’) in 2020 for the Museum Aan de Stroom in Antwerp regarding their colonial collection. During this documentary they talked about the meanings of these collections and what was evoked when looking at the collections with different people in Kinshasa and Antwerp. This movie was part of an exhibition “100 X Congo” curated by Nadia Nsayi and Els De Palmenaer. Furthermore, CFP organized two editions of the decolonizing performance festival SOKL and produced different movies on stories about the many connections between Kinshasa and Brussels.

The partnership agreements with Waza and CFP concerned the transfer of information to the DRC on the collections of human remains historically affiliated to and human remains present at the RMCA . Originally the intention was to assess opinions in the DRC by means of 20 to 40 audio-visual interviews/conversations/consultations²², including their transcriptions and end report. For this, Waza and CFP selected a number of profiles such as academia, government agents, journalists, lawyers, representatives of descendant communities, artists and activists. Their selections were based on the experience, expertise and/or knowledge of their interlocutors on the topic of restitution and repatriation . The project team for Waza consisted of Patrick Mudekereza (artistic director of Waza), Joseph Kasau (video artist and photographer) and Stéphane Kabila (curator and researcher), and for Collective Faire-part, of Nizar saleh (filmmaker and photographer), Paul Shemisi (director and cameraman) and Noah Matanga (visual artist and designer).

²² Each contact perceived the exchange, interview, consultation and/or conversation differently. That’s why we chose not to categorize these filmed practices to fixed formats.

The partnership agreement with Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembele consisted of the organization of a field trip to Feshi, the geographical key location of one of the case studies from the ancient AAcollections, the organization of a round table inviting key interlocutors concerning the repatriation of human remains, and an assessment report.

4.2. Context and methodologies

Due to COVID 19 restrictions and a growing insight in the colonial collections of human remains, the original approach of the RMCA of organizing seminars in Central Africa had to be reconsidered. The RMCA decided to search for interlocutors in the DRC to collaborate at a distance.

In the first phase different online meetings were held with all partners. The second phase focused on a better understanding of the HOME project, namely by developing some documents on request: an adapted summary of the project, a summary of a case study of the collection donated by Ferdinand Van de Ginste, a survey format, proposed by the RMCA for the audio-visualized conversations, timetables, etc. In a third phase Waza and CFP organized preliminary meetings and audio-visualized conversations with Congolese interlocutors, respectively in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. In a fourth phase fieldwork concerning one case study was prepared and organized in collaboration with Prof. Placide Mumbembele. A final phase consisted of bringing together the Congolese interlocutors throughout public activities and disseminating the HOME-project at the University of Kinshasa (Unikin).

At the methodological level, Waza formed a focus group with a representative of each profile to analyze the survey, the list of interviewees and discuss the results. The focus group consisted of Professor Donatien Dibwe (historian), Pierre Kahenga (civil society leader), Denise Maheho (journalist) and Clotilde Mutita (political actress and former deputy mayor of Lubumbashi). This made it possible to revise the survey and address a certain number of people in each category. CFP organized their first meetings with lawyer Théodore Nganzi, the sculpture artist Freddy Tsimba and at the time our third partner Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembele. Together with Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembele, Lies Busselen discussed and prepared the case study on Ferdinand Van de Ginste for the field trip to Feshi. They established their first contacts with key interlocutors from Feshi and found two of our important interlocutors in Feshi, namely Lardin Kunonga Nzadimwena, the general secretary of the Superior Institute of medical techniques (ISTM) in Feshi and Fabien Boko Matondo, national deputy from Feshi (“Fabien Boko,” 2021).

4.3. Repatriation opinions in the DRC

The goals were to actively set up as much collaboration, partnership and dialogue in the DRC as possible through informing and sensitizing various interlocutors about the existence of the human remains collections at the RMCA and in RBINs in Belgium. The RMCA wished to better understand which opinions prevailed regarding the existence of these collections and their possible final destination. Who were the prior interlocutors for the RMCA when considering possible repatriation processes? For this purpose, a representative sampling exercise and reaching out to various interlocutors was needed, at the time referred to as “stakeholders”, including academics, politicians, museum professionals, experts, civil society organizations, communities, families and descendants. The partners Waza and CFP informed and contacted concerned Congolese academia, museum professionals, politicians, descendants and possible source communities in both cities. They established preliminary meetings, interviews and a focus group. They sensitized various interlocutors and built, throughout their encounters, a restitution- and repatriation-concerned community in the DRC. These knowledge exchanges have been captured for each encounter. In attachment both reports of Waza and Faire-part on their respective results are provided (Attachment n° 1 and n°2).

In Lubumbashi Waza reached 28 interlocutors, in Kinshasa three people were consulted in a first phase. In the beginning of 2022 CFP reached out to 21 interlocutors together with project researcher Lies Busselen. The consulting process was different in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, explained by a difference in urban contexts, infrastructure and political situation. Where Lubumbashi is a provincial capital, Kinshasa is the political centre of the DRC. Political, cultural and economic interests weigh heavily in Kinshasa as a centre of decision-making . Furthermore, CFP has no infrastructure in Kinshasa whereas Waza has in Lubumbashi. So CFP did not have a fixed workplace and specific office equipment to prepare and organize surveys. They also experienced difficulties in getting appointments with the various interlocutors and government institutions in Kinshasa because of the simultaneous discussion on restitution and repatriation during the 34th summit of the Heads of State of the African Union (“34e sommet des Chefs d’Etat de l’UA,” 2021). A national commission was created afterwards, presided by the prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde, to develop a national policy on the restitution and repatriation of Congolese cultural heritage kept outside of the continent. This commission would include political representatives, experts and scientists, as well as traditional authorities such as representatives of source communities, chiefs and monarchs. Therefore, it was felt necessary to wait for the Head of State president Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo to

communicate on his intentions before these institutional interlocutors would commit themselves to filmed conversations (“Colonisation,” 2021).

The final reports of Waza and CFP (in attachment) resulted in an analysis based on the conversations they had with many interlocutors. Every conversation was rich in information, which cannot be translated into statistics nor general assumptions. On the whole, there are three points of convergence:

- (1) All interlocutors assume repatriation of ancestral remains is not a point of discussion. Many added how this should be discussed bilaterally, assuming the responsibilities of the Belgian and Congolese State to ensure open, equal and equitable repatriation processes.
- (2) All interlocutors want information on the presence, use and any provenance or other scientific research carried out on the human remains of Congolese held in collections in Belgium to be made accessible, without any restriction. The interlocutors thus called for an end to any policy that could be considered a concealment of data on this sensitive subject.
- (3) All interlocutors would like to see an equal and equitable dialogue between Congolese and Belgian actors on all levels. This consultation should be open to all those who wish to discuss the subject and facilitation should be provided to enable them to contact their counterparts in the other country. The interlocutors thus demanded the establishment of a consultation mechanism based on openness.

There were, on the other hand, several points of divergence, notably on the question of reparation (financial or moral), and the debate on the scientific value of human remains, the symbolic or memorial value in defining the future for these remains. The points of divergence that emerged out of these consultations and conversations express the need for further equal and equitable exchange, dialogue and debate on these issues.

4.4. Working with civil society

Throughout the partnerships coordinated by Marie-Reine Iyumva at the RMCA the scientific staff informed different representatives of civil society, members of the Congolese diaspora.

Six meetings were organized in 2021 and 2022 (15/07/2020; 22/02/2021; 25/05/2021; 14/07/2021; 06/09/2022; 27/10/2022) to inform the civil society members about the proceedings of the HOME-project at the RMCA. Minutes of these meetings are available if necessary. The RMCA established throughout these informative sessions a project presentation on the website that could be used in broad communication, a summary of the history of the questions regarding these kinds of collections and a methodological note (attachment n°3).

On 25 March 2021 Suzanne Monkasa of the Platform of Women of the Congolese diaspora presented a statement with three recommendations regarding ethical viewpoints, the legal framework and political responsibilities of the Belgian government regarding the collections of human remains from colonial contexts during the first follow-up committee of the HOME-project (attachment n° 4).

On 27 October 2022 a meeting was held to encourage exchange and dialogue between the members of civil society in Belgium with the Congolese partners. They discussed the organisation of an independent conference on 8 November 2022. In their press release for this conference they ask for a prolongation of HOME for at least one year (attachment nr° 5).

4.5. Field related exchanges

Throughout the HOME-project awareness for vocabulary and underlining significations of words increased. One of these important words to which we were confronted was the word ‘mission’ still used in administration for stays abroad . This is a word which immediately evokes missionary engagements and structures during colonialism. Though the original meaning of ‘to send’ seems for travel abroad, historically “mission” has been used by Jesuit missionaries for establishing schools and churches in overseas countries (Strong, 2018). For this reason we prefer to use ‘travel’, yet in a broader understanding we could speak of joint field research. Exchange out in the field can therefore be considered as important zones of contact in an international museumscape (Clifford, 2019).

Travel from Belgium to the DRC

During her stay in Kinshasa from 15 January 2022 until 3 April 2022, Lies Busselen organized with P. Mumbembele a study visit to Feshi, situated 700 km from the capital. The oral history data, mainly stemming from dialogue and participatory observation, inform on how people perceive and embed their histories in Feshi.²³ This memory in the present is another aspect of current provenance research (Hunt, 2016). In Kinshasa most conversations and exchanges focused on present ideas about restitution. Images and sounds were captured and hopefully will lead to a movie intended for a larger audience to become aware of Congolese perspectives on a mostly European managed debate. Congolese interlocutors, from political representatives, community representatives, museums experts to artists, journalists and lawyers talked and

²³ This case study has been developed in the unpublished article ‘Deterring the past. Retracing ancestral traces’ written by Lies Busselen and Placide Mumbembele. This article will be published by the Africamuseum in 2023.

shared their ideas and views on the existence of collections of Congolese ancestral remains from colonial times in Belgium.

As explained previously, more than 20 interlocutors were contacted in Kinshasa. In an institutional context, meetings were set up with partner and general IMNC director Placide Mumbembele as well as with the Minister in charge of Culture and Arts, Cathérine Kathungu Faruhu. The IMNC belongs to her ministerial competences.

In the second phase, Lies Busselen and Dr. Prof. Placide Mumbembele travelled to Feshi, Kikwit and Masi-Manimba in order to comprehend and contextualize the complex case of the colonial agent Ferdinand Van de Ginste by means of informal and formal conversations, exchanges and interviews.

In a final phase, sensitizing, discussing and informing was central to two public events. Lies Busselen accompanied the IMNC in programming and held a national workshop, a historic moment where political, academic and traditional representatives discussed this issue on 30 March 2022 at the museum in Kinshasa MNRDC (Musée National de la RDC). She also accepted an invitation from the School of Criminology with a focus on transitional justice to present the HOME project on 31 March 2022 to students, PhD students and academic staff from the Faculty of Law and the School of Criminology at the University of Kinshasa. In doing so, the actual restitution, reconstitution and/or reparation debate and provenance as a process became shared topics with academic interlocutors at the UNIKIN and a larger spectrum of political and traditional interlocutors at the MNRDC.

Travel from DRC to Belgium

From 16 October to 12 November 2022, the filmmakers Paul Shemisi, Nizar Saleh and Noah Matanga from CFP and the artistic researchers Stéphane Kabila, Joseph Kasau and Patrick Mudekereza from Waza travelled from the DRC to Belgium to visit the archives and collections of human remains in the RMCA and RBINs, collaborate with Congolese-Belgian experts and activists of civil society and meet the institutional partners of the HOME-project.

As part of their collaboration within HOME, the artistic researchers and cineastes of Waza and Faire-part contributed to a program of diverse public and scientific activities during their stay.²⁴

During the first two weeks Waza and CFP wished to meet with project colleagues, as well as with colleagues from various RMCA departments and visits. After their arrival on Sunday, October 17, 2022 and a first event on restitution the partners followed two internal Science days

²⁴ The program was shared online: https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/visit_waza_faire-part

at the RMCA consisting of scientific presentations and a poster session. One of the presentations was on the RMCA contributions to the HOME-project and the collaboration with partners in the DRC. Waza and CFP attended the whole program and were impressed by the amount of expertise on the DRC in various fields at the RMCA. On 19 October 2022 and 28 October 2022 the colleagues of Waza and CFP visited the paleontology collections at RBINs and the ethnographic and biological collections of human remains at the RMCA. They met with colleagues from other federal scientific institutions and universities and shared their views on colonial collections of human remains. On 26 October 2022 they visited the State Archives to have a better understanding of the vast archives on Belgium's colonial past and to look into several files that Lies Busselen had consulted during archival research (Cuvelier depot).

From 1 to 11 November 2022 five public activities were programmed in agreement with Waza and CFP. The public activities served a variety of objectives: Waza and Faire-part wanted to (1) translate in an artistic approach the need for repatriation towards a broad audience, (2) reflect critically upon and share their collaboration experiences within HOME and finally, (3) show a carefully selected amount of rushes of the filmed conversations they organized in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa. The first objective resulted in the creation of two performances as a tribute and contribution to existing public commemorative activities on All Saints Day of 1 November and the Armistice of 11 November. With their performances CFP and Waza wanted to complement and reinforce the existing activities. The second objective was partly integrated in a museum talk, on 3 November 2022, and an academic presentation on the annual meeting 'Give and Take. Anthropology as exchange' on 10 November 2022. The third and last objectives were fulfilled during the main activity of CFP and Waza, when they presented their compilation 'Shadow of Words' at Grand Hospice organized by CEC (Coopération Education Culture) at the city center of Brussels on 5 November 2022.

On All Saints' Day, the AfricaMuseum and Change asbl invited a broad audience to a *Memorial walk and performance in memory of the Congolese victims of Belgium's human zoos*. The colonial exhibition of Belgian King Leopold II was held in 1897 in the vicinity of the present museum. In the past Congolese were exhibited in a human zoo. The memorial walk was merged with another commemorative walk dedicated to the same histories. More than 70 people attended this activity. The audience was diverse in age and cultural background. François Makanga, historical guide at the RMCA shared his views on the history of human zoos and the world exhibition at Tervuren in 1897 with Prof. Mavambu Mavungu, a Kongo dignitary and member of the citizen movement of the Congolese diaspora (Mouvement Citoyen de la Diaspora Congolaise – MCDC). The participants stopped at different places starting at the museum entrance and finishing at the Parish Church of Saint John Evangelist at Tervuren next

to the graves of seven Congolese Ekia, Gemba, Kitukwa, Mpela, Zao, Samba and Mbange (“Memorial walk and performance in memory of the Congolese victims of Belgium’s human zoos,” n.d.).

During the walk, the Congolese artists of CFP and Waza put on a performance entitled *You have to see it to believe it* as a tribute to the above-mentioned deceased, as well as to other Congolese who died at world exhibitions organised in Belgium. The walk was also developed at an earlier stage in collaboration with Georgine Dibua. Her association Bakushinta organises guided tours and commemorative events in Brussels. Change ASBL participated with introductory discourses on the impact of these histories on racism today and pleading in conclusion for the repatriation of all ancestral remains.

On 3 November 2022 the AfricaMuseum organized a museum talk with Paul Shemisi (CFP), Stéphane Kabila (Waza), Suzanne Monkasa (Plateforme des femmes de la diaspora congolaise) and Lies Busselen (RMCA) to exchange on their experiences and understanding of the HOME-project. Lies Busselen presented the larger objectives of the HOME-project, and the joint events in DRC to reinforce collaboration with Congolese partners. Paul and Stéphane explained how they got involved and how they contributed to the discussion on repatriation in the DRC. Suzanne Monkasa talked about the way civil society was implicated in the HOME-project, how they firstly were informed and later on contributed to the first recommendations for the follow-up committee of the HOME-project. She pleaded for an ethical consideration of the collections of human remains and collaboration with civil society and Congolese partners in the DRC (*MuseumTalks | Quel avenir pour les restes humains ?*, 2022).

The main activity with a premiere of the short film of rushes “The Shadow of Words” took place on Saturday 5 November 2022. More than 100 people attended. The CFP, the Waza Art Centre, the AfricaMuseum and the CEC invited a broad audience to a preview screening of a compilation of excerpts from discussions held in DRC on human remains in Belgian collections. Restitution, repatriation and reparation are some of the topics discussed. Afterwards, the film researchers from Waza and CFP exchanged with the audience. One of the most striking reactions during the conversation was the fact that the visions related to colonial past, and certainly a sensitive topic such as human remains, that live in Congo among Congolese experts, artists, museum people, politicians are completely unknown to their Belgian interlocutors. Another important remark was how vocabulary caused problems from the beginning. Congolese speakers were surprised that they had never been informed about this subject and that it was young artists who informed them about the urgency of the situation. Coming to Belgium made it possible to realize the extent of the problem, but this was not the case for all

the Congolese speakers they talked with in the DRC. The Congolese scientists were disappointed that they were not more informed on this subject. The research is not done by people from the source communities and sometimes without dialogue with the community, so it is necessary to facilitate this dialogue. The Congolese experts must bring knowledge that is not present among Belgian scientists. Lastly, the rushes showed how many Congolese speakers found it necessary to have state-to-state agreements prior to repatriation.

On 10 November 2022 Patrick Mudekereza and Lies Busselen were scheduled to present a paper on the collaborations within the HOME-project at the annual SSE conference in Neuchâtel. This presentation was canceled due to unforeseen circumstances.

Lastly, on 11 November 2022 the partners of CFP and Waza held a last performance ‘The past future’ before their departure on occasion of the commemoration at Schaerbeek for the Congolese ancient combatants who lost their lives during the world wars.

Conclusive recommendations

Everybody that we consulted as RMCA in DRC and Belgium agrees on the urgency of repatriation processes of human remains still held in unethical and questionable environments at the RMCA and RBINs today. Therefore the RMCA-team of the HOME-project recommends a State-to-state repatriation, demanding no further research concerning their origin, unless by the countries of origin in collaboration with Belgian researchers. This process is continuing and open-ended. This signifies that a need for reparation, follow-up modalities and further historical understanding is developed by countries of origin and their interlocutors in collaboration with Belgian interlocutors and homologues. However, this process should be financially supported by the Belgian State, since these painful collections are the result of Belgian colonialism. The RMCA recommends a moratorium on further research or manipulation of these human remains such as measurements, photographs, scans or printing 3D copies unless on explicit demand or request from the countries of origin. When provenance processes are asked for, the RMCA proposes case-by-case studies in close collaboration between Belgian researchers and their source country homologues. A moratorium does not intend to exclude further transparent research on a historical understanding of the development of colonial collections of human remains in Belgium and to clarify the circumstances in which these human remains were removed.

Inventories are helpful but not the end goal. Each collection consists of a number of human remains that have been classified in many different ways as is visible in the categories used in the inventories. The mentioned categories reflect choices and convictions that changed and overlapped through time, from war trophies to prehistoric artefacts. The way these categories were used make even an estimation of the number of individuals a hazardous exercise. Errors in registration, transcription and interpretation were made in the past and are repeated in the present. Thus, a complete and accurate inventory is impossible; or even sometimes results in confusing and elusive classifications, repeating erroneous past classifications. An insight into the mechanisms of past institutional decisions might improve the historical understanding on how collections were developed and are in need of an institutional follow-up of provenance research in this regard.

A human centered approach in future research is needed, with consent and in dialogue with concerned homologues and interlocutors of countries of origin. More understanding is needed of the contexts of historical injustice through the study of the institutional structures and

networks in Belgium and in the countries of origin. This provides insight into the construction of these collections, as the collecting practices were clearly encouraged by the Belgian colonial administration. Also, provenance research is not a fixed methodology, but rather “a troubling practice” and a continuing negotiation (von Oswald, 2020). Therefore we propose to approach the provenance research of human remains in dialogue with concerned interlocutors based on collaborative research. Provenance research at the same time responds to a highly political question of postcolonial responsibility of the countries that removed human remains from their contexts in the past and hold them today.

Many unidentified human remains are contextualized more thoroughly when reading the provenance files. These include descriptive geographical and contextual explanations. But even when putting these different fragments of information together, the histories remain incomplete and descriptive. If not part of collaborative processes the contextual understanding of donations remains relying essentially on data within the colonial archive. Going beyond identification and object-centered biographies of human remains implies to leave decisions up to homologue researchers and institutions in countries of origin. In other words, the biographies of the subcollections of human remains are limited readings of the colonial archive and are not to be confused with personal biographies of the human remains. They mainly reveal the ways in which these human remains were acquired, a topic that has not been researched for decades in a “conspiracy of silence” (Legassick and Rassool, 2015:1).²⁵

A long term heuristic historical method is needed in provenance processes in order to analyse sufficiently and effectively institutional and colonial perspectives on the provenance of human remains. Inclusion of oral sources in present collaborative re-constructions of the past is mandatory as well. The importance of dialogue and collaboration in heuristic research has been shown during the “long summer of provenance” in 2017 in Germany, which was a mediatized debate on provenance of colonial heritage in Germany. Since the art historian Bénédicte Savoy left the Humboldt Forum due to a lack of provenance research opportunities, an intense discussion on collaboration, dialogue, access and research has been triggered (Förster, 2016; Förster and Bose, 2019), which shows how this must be seen as an open-ended process. Further multivocal and collaborative research, allowing fieldwork, including oral history and other methodological approaches, could reveal historical and cultural layers to these trajectories, and

²⁵ For more extended provenance information on these case studies you can consult the continuing descriptive inventory at the AfricaMuseum (contact: Lies Busselen).

foremost nurture conversations with concerned interlocutors in DR Congo. A more equal-to-equal collaboration was developed throughout the case study of Van de Ginste, resulting in a co-written article, going to be published in 2023. This shows how collaborations should be developed in equal ownership in dialogue with and by countries of origin, to be embedded in equal partnerships and scientific collaborations on concrete case studies.

The HOME-project provided, at the level of the RMCA, the opportunities to establish initial and informal contacts with individual and institutional partners in the DRC and various partners from civil society represented by the Congolese diaspora in Belgium . This, however, created confusion on the scope of the HOME-project, which includes all collections of human remains in Belgium, whereas the interlocutors in DRC and Belgium assumed that the colonial collections were at the center of the HOME-project. Partners in the DRC regretted being restricted to the level of the RMCA as one of the institutional partners. The general objective concerned the inventory, legal aspects, feasibility of scientific research, DNA analyses, bio-ethical and moral questions regarding all human remains in public and private collections in Belgium. Ownership on how to proceed from a methodological point of view was a continuous source of tension throughout institutional and partnership collaborations of the RMCA. In fact, there was an inherent ambiguity between the nature of a research project albeit with a political component, and the societal and political questions among interlocutors in DRC as well as in Belgium, expecting formal decisions on repatriation. However, the RMCA could only recommend repatriation to be integrated in a policy concerning human remains at the Belgian federal level. This explains why the partners in the DRC and representatives of various associations organized a press release and sought to directly meet with the political authorities in Belgium to transmit their recommendations.

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Appendix

- °1 Rapport final Collectif Faire-part a Belgo-Congolese collectif
- °2 Rapport de la consultation des acteurs concernés à Lubumbashi par le centre d'art Waza
- °3 Note méthodologique et premiers résultats de MRAC dans HOME
- °4 Présentation S. Monkasa Follow-up committee HOME
- °5 Communiqué de presse: pour le rapatriement des dépouilles des ancêtres congolais

H.O.M.E. ‘Human remains Origin(s)
Multidisciplinary Evaluation’

RAPPORT FINAL

COLLECTIF FAIRE-PART
a Belgo-Congolese film collective

Belgique & R.D. Congo
Représenté par Paul Shemisi,
Noah Matanga et Nizar Saleh,
membres du collectif à Kinshasa
www.collectif-fairepart.com

Dans le cadre du projet de BELSPO (2019-2022), intitulé H.O.M.E. ‘Human remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation’.

Vers la fin de l’année 2020, le collectif Faire-Part à Kinshasa, a commencé une convention de partenariat avec MRAC (Musée Royal d’Afrique Centrale) pour participer à l’élaboration d’une liste de minimum 20 et maximum 40 personnes ciblées et diversifiées dans la ville de Kinshasa, la préparation d’un questionnaire pour les entretiens filmés avec les partenaires du projet, une concertation d’introduction du projet et préparation d’une consultation filmée avec les intervenants/répondants, , une présentation du projet H.O.M.E., un formulaire d’autorisation des interviews qui a été changé en ‘consentement de consultation’ avec spécifications pour le partage de l’utilisation du matériel filmé. Toutes ces engagement étaient liés à deux thématiques : l’existence des collections de restes humains et la restitution/rapatriement des collections de restes humains.

Au long du processus nous avons travaillées en étroite collaboration et en consultation avec le Centre d’arts WAZA de Lubumbashi et l’équipe de MRAC.

Equipe du projet

Noah Matanga (artiste vidéaste)

Paul Shemisi (cinéaste)

Nizar Saleh (cinéaste)

Première phase

Malgré les emails envoyés et les coups de fils téléphoniques vers le début de l’année 2021, nous avons connu des difficultés pour avoir des rendez-vous avec les différentes parties prenantes et les différentes institutions du gouvernement à Kinshasa sous prétextes que le Président de la République Félix Tshisekedi a créé une commission spéciale au parlement congolais pour la restitution et qu’il faut d’abord attendre que le Chef de l’état dévoile ses intentions avant que ces institutions s’engagent à entretenir avec nous dans les interviews. Et cela avait un peu ralenti les enquêtes à mener.

Méthodologie

Notre méthodologie était d’approcher une personne avec une connaissance sur le sujet de la restitution et de restes humains congolais qui sont en Belgique, présenter à cette personne une

série de questionnaires auxquels elle choisira de répondre et qu'après qu'elle puisse nous recommander chez quelqu'un d'autre et ainsi de suite.

Cependant pour une discussion autour du projet, nous avons été reçus par le professeur Yoka dans son bureau à l'INA qui n'avait pas le temps de nous répondre mais nous avait proposé de chercher les fragments de l'histoire de ses restes dans leurs lieu de provenance et dans les ouvrages. Quant à Juliana Lumumba, elle nous avait promis de répondre aux questionnaires qu'après la restitution du relique de son père sera effectué.

Nous sommes allés aux musée de mont Ngaliema rencontré le directeur mais il n'avait pas de temps de nous recevoir à cause du déménagement. Enfin nous avons suggéré que MRAC puisse arranger pour nous les prises de contact avec les parties prenantes à Kinshasa. Mais nous avons pu quand même enregistrer seulement 3 interviews en audio et vidéo avant que Lies Busselen est arrivé à Kinshasa au début de 2022.

1.	30/01/2021	Théodore Nganzi	Juriste pour questions reliées aux patrimoines
2.	10/03/2021	Freddy Tsimba	Artiste Sculpteur
3.	01/04/2021	Placide Mumbembele	Actuel DG IMNC

Deuxième phase

Dès l'arrivée de Lies Busselen à Kinshasa, l'ordre du jour de la première réunion était axé sur le réseautage et les appels, mais aussi d'élaborer un programme fiable des différents rendez-vous.

Le travail était ambitieux, il fallait parler des personnes qui font partie de l'élite de la RDC, des personnes très occupées et parfois pas très à l'aise sur des questions épineuses de colonisation ou de relations historiquement perplexe entre le Congo et la Belgique.

Nous avons sur la période du 13/01/2022 au 16 /03/2022 réussi à faire 21 captations visuelles et sonores des différents intervenant choisi par le projet Home.

En même temps nous avons travaillé sur le montage de 20 entretiens. Nous avons essayé de réduire le temps pour chaque entretien entre les 30 et 35 minutes. Notre tâche était de mètre chacune des vidéos des entretiens filmés dans des disques durs pour le MRAC mais également dans des clés USB respective avec le nom de chacune des personnes ayant participé au projet Home de Kinshasa et invité pendant les débats.

Nous avons réussi à arrangé des entrevues des personnes ciblées au préalable par Home. Bien calculé son trajet pour être à temps au rendez-vous. Kinshasa est une grande ville, on ne compte

plus les embouteillage et l'insuffisance des moyens de transport. Je suis fier qu'on a relevé ce défi mais aussi d'avoir pu tenir les engagements pour le projet Home.

Ci-dessous, vous trouverez la liste complète des noms et des fonctions des intervenants consultés dans le cadre du projet Home de Kinshasa.

1	13/01/2022	Henry Kalama	Directeur de L'Académie des Beaux Art
2	24/01/2022	Joseph Ibongo Gilungula	DG MNRDC et Professeur d'Histoire
3	25/01/2022	Bruno Lapika	Prof. Anthro./ UNIKIN
4	25/01/2022	Placide Mumbembe Sanger	DG IMNC/ Prof.Anthro./UNIKIN
5	27/01/2022	Isidore Ndaywel Nziem	Prof. Histoire F. des lettres/ UNIKIN
6	28/01/2022	Jeannette Van de Ginste	Fille Biologique de Van de Ginste
7	02/02/2022	Steve Bandoma	Artiste sculpteur et peintre
8	02/02/2022	Fernand Tshobi Kayolo	Secrétaire Exécutif/comité Consultatif nat.
9	04/02/2022	Roland Mulumba	Professeur d'art à L'INA
10	04/02/2022	Joël Ipara Motema	DG Comité Consultatif nat./Prof. Anthro.
11	11/02/2022	Josette Shaje	Prof. Anthropologie
12	15/02/2022	Augustin Bikale	Exécutive national de la culture/ UNESCO
13	15/02/2022	Sinzo Aanza	Artiste contemporain / Ecrivain
14	18/02/2022	Joseph Ibongo Gilungula	DG MNRDC et Professeur d'Histoire
15	19/02/2022	Pamphile Mabilia Mantumba	Prof. d'Histoire/ UNIKIN
16	23/02/2022	André Yoka Lye Mudaba	DG INA/ Ecrivain
17	23/02/2022	Dada Kahindo	Directrice plateforme contempo./Comédienne
18	24/02/2022	Marie Omba Djunga	CEO/ Organisatrice Lumumba ville
19	02/03/2022	Roland Lumumba	Architecte et Juriste
20	03/03/2022	Raoul Kienge Kienge	Prof. de droit/ DG école crim./UNIKIN
21	16/03/2022	Catherine Furaha Kathungu	Ministre de la Culture RDC

Bref résumé des avis recueillis

Toutes les personnes consultées ne parlent que d'une chose fondamentale, c'est que la Belgique restitue et qu'ensemble avec les congolais ils trouvent la bonne manière de le faire. Et cela sans entaché aux relations entre les deux pays. L'attitude des congolais est celui de la concorde, de l'harmonie, que tout se déroule dans le calme et à l'issue d'un dialogue. Toutes les personnes

consultées ne sont pas fondamentalement opposées à la restitution et/ou au rapatriement des restes humains. Il y a deux aspects importants qui peuvent faciliter des processus de restitution et/ou rapatriement et qui semblent nécessaires à tous les répondants :

(1) Coopération encadrée dans des relations égales et équitables entre les acteurs congolais et belges.

(2) Processus visant l'harmonie, la paix et la tranquillité. Il faut du temps pour que de telles blessures guérissent.

(3) Nécessité fondamentale de privilégier le dialogue comme base de tout processus de restitution et/ou de rapatriement. Nous avons noté que les répondants ont attiré notre attention sur un certain nombre de points sensibles concernant l'utilisation des mots comme « restes humains », « collections », « restitution », « rapatriement », etc. Peut-on parler de restes humains ? Souvent, les répondants ont automatiquement utilisé le mot "ancêtres".

(4) La restitution est souvent confondue avec les objets, ce qui a entraîné l'abstraction et la supposition d'"objets" et de "collections" de "restes humains", mais n'a pas immédiatement fait l'association avec "nos ancêtres". En bref, il est nécessaire de mieux informer et partager les données concernant ces "collections".

Difficultés

La mise en réseau et la prise de contact ont été incroyablement exigeantes en termes d'énergie, de temps et de ressources. Il faut plus qu'un simple contact et des exigences pour établir des relations de confiance. Ces relations prennent forme entre égaux : un juriste congolais avec un juriste belge, un ministre belge de la culture avec un ministre congolaise de la culture, et ainsi de suite. Les homologues sont des interlocuteurs naturels. Un jeune collectif de cinéastes qui souhaite immortaliser sur pellicule les opinions, positions et points de vue les plus chargés politiquement et historiquement est une tâche très ambitieuse, voire impossible.

Le projet était de grande envergure et les estimations en matière de faisabilité et de budget n'étaient pas réaliste. Sur papier et sur le terrain il y a une marge. Les moyens mis à notre disposition n'étaient conséquents pour permettre de travailler dans le contexte Kinshasa, une ville rempli d'imprévu les rendez-vous ne tiennent qu'à un fil.

Collectif Faire-Part se focalise sur les images comme médium. Nous n'avons pas des compétences pour des analyses des parties prenantes et des rapports d'évaluation. C'est dans ce contexte délicat que nous avons travaillé, et si c'était à refaire les conventions et contrats aurait été discuter différemment.

Perspective future

Au final nous espérons que toutes ses ressources d'images et de sons qui sont le point de vu des congolais sur la question des restes humain ne finiront pas dans des tiroirs de l'oubli. Nous voulons retravailler ses images et pouvoir le monté dans un documentaire (?).

Le Collectif Faire-part a enfin réalisé (1) des enquêtes enregistrées (audio/audiovisuelles) auprès de minimum 24 intervenants, (2) des montages de vidéo de 20 interviews et (3) deux couvertures filmique en 2022 pendant les ateliers au musée National le 30 Mars 2022 et une conférence à l'UNIKIN le 32 Mars 2022 à Kinshasa concernant les collections de restes humains en Belgique. Finalement nous avons créés de chaque entretien et/ou évènement (4) une reportage des photos.



Human remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation H.O.M.E
Rapport de la consultation des acteurs concernés à Lubumbashi.

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Rappel du contexte, méthodologie et équipe du projet

Depuis 2020, le Centre d'art Waza collabore au projet Human remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation, en sigle H.O.M.E, par l'entremise du Musée Royal d'Afrique Centrale (AfricaMuseum/Terve). Le rôle du Centre d'art Waza est de mener des consultations d'acteurs congolais dans la région de Lubumbashi et dans la partie Est de la RDC et de recueillir leurs avis sur la présence des restes humains dans les collections publiques en Belgique.

Une convention de partenariat prévoit un nombre minimal de 20 interviews audiovisuels avec une analyse de partie prenantes. Waza a effectué une sélection de personnes regroupant les profils ci-après : artistes et acteurs culturels, journalistes, avocat, chercheurs/académiques, acteurs politiques, activistes/personnalité de la société civile, etc. Au final 28 personnes ont été interviewées comme indiqué dans la liste en attache.

Au niveau méthodologique, Waza a constitué une équipe d'amis critiques avec un représentant de chaque profil pour analyser le questionnaire, la liste des interviewés et discuter des résultats. Le groupe d'amis critiques était constitué du professeur Donatien Dibwe (Historien), de Pierre Kahenga (responsable de la société civile), Denise Maheho (Journaliste) et Clotilde Mutita (actrice politique et ancienne maire adjointe de Lubumbashi). Ce travail en amont a permis de revoir le questionnaire et de cibler un certain nombre de personnes dans chaque catégorie.

L'équipe du projet était constituée de Patrick Mudekereza (directeur de Waza), Joseph Kasau (artiste vidéaste) et Stéphane Kabila (curateur et chercheur).

Résumé des avis recueillis

Dans l'ensemble, nous avons observé deux points de convergence :

- Toutes les personnes consultées souhaitent que l'information sur la présence, l'usage et toutes les recherches de provenances ou autres recherches scientifiques effectuées sur les restes humains des congolais détenus dans les collections en Belgique soit rendue accessible, et cela sans aucune restriction.

Les interviewés ont ainsi demandé de mettre fin à toute politique qui pourrait être considérée comme une dissimulation de données sur ce sujet sensible.

- Toutes les personnes consultées souhaitent qu'une concertation entre les acteurs congolais et belges, y compris la diaspora, soit amorcée et maintenue pour dialoguer sur le sujet. Cette concertation doit s'ouvrir à toutes les personnes qui souhaitent échanger sur le sujet et une facilitation doit leur permettre d'entrer en contact avec leurs homologues dans l'autre pays.

Les interviewés ont ainsi exigé la mise en place d'un mécanisme de concertation basé sur une ouverture pour faire entendre les avis des congolais dans leur diversité de profils.

Il y a eu, à l'opposé, plusieurs points de divergences, notamment sur la question de réparation (financière ou morale), et le débat l'accent à mettre sur la valeur scientifique, symbolique ou mémorielle dans la définition d'un futur pour ces restes. Plusieurs tendances ressortent de ces matériaux et nous informent sur la nécessité de poursuivre les échanges et le débat sur ces questions.

Difficultés

Dans le cadre de la réalisation de ce projet, nous avons rencontré des difficultés. Une première difficulté a été les contacts avec les représentants de l'Etat et les politiciens en général. En dépit de nos efforts, aucun acteur politique n'a consenti à nous accorder un entretien enregistré. Nous avons néanmoins eu des échanges non enregistrés avec certains d'entre eux. Cette réticence semble être justifiée par le fait que le président de la République et tous les grands mouvements

politiques du pays n'ont pas encore pris position sur le sujet, et donc les autres semblent réticents à prendre publiquement position.

Comme projet de collaboration entre une organisation congolaise et une institution belge, le projet n'a pas été exempt de malentendu. Si la communication avec l'AfricaMuseum a été maintenue avec beaucoup d'efficacité, certains points de friction ont été mis à jour, notamment sur le contenu du questionnaire (quelle perspective adopter), la description du projet (qui a réduit dans un premier l'évidence de la violence coloniale qui a donné lieu à ces collections), et certains aspects méthodologiques (consultations préalables de certains professionnels dont nous n'avons pas été informés, refus d'utilisation du matériel pour un projet ARES par Waza alors que la convention nous y autorise, etc). Dans l'autre sens, le timing du projet a été allongé au niveau congolais bien au-delà des délais convenus et cela a suscité des frustrations du côté belge.

Perspectives d'avenir

Les interviews sont de la matière première pour des activités de vulgarisation (publications, expositions), de recherche, mais aussi de création artistique.

Ils constituent à la fois un outil de recherche et un outil de création. A court terme, deux actions peuvent être menées pour fixer les deux approches :

- Mener une analyse de parties prenantes à partir de ces interviews. Comme éléments d'archives, les vidéos nécessitent une première analyse pour faciliter les études ultérieures. Il serait souhaitable que cette analyse se fasse par un spécialiste congolais. Damien Kahambwe, qui fait partie des interviewés peut assurer cette tâche.
- Développer un premier projet de création artistique. Le Centre d'art Waza, tout comme le Collectif Faire Part qui assure le même travail à Kinshasa, est avant intéressé par les dispositifs de création artistique et de curation. A ce titre, développer un premier travail de création, de préférence en résidence en Belgique et au Congo, pourrait faciliter le développement d'un premier projet de création qui va dans ce sens.

Il s'avère aussi important de multiplier les tables rondes sur le sujet, à l'image de celle organisée à Kinshasa en février 2022.

Liste des personnes consultées et dont les interviews ont été enregistrées

Prénom / Pseudo	Nom	Profil 1	Profil 2	Organisation
Igor	Becker	Avocat		
Donatien	Dibwe	Chercheur	Historien	Université de Lubumbashi
Iragi	Elisha	Journaliste	Ecrivain	
Brillant	Isanzo	Animateur social		Mutuelle Tshokwe
Damien	Kahambwe	Animateur communautaire	Consultant en responsabilité sociétale des entreprises	Entreprises minières et agence de consultant
Pierre	Kahenga	Activiste	Expert en développement organisationnel	Fondation Communautaire du Katanga et Pole Institute
Chadrack	Kakule	Curateur	Philosophe	Centre d'art Waza
Agathon / Agxon / Chef Tumpa	Kakusa	Artiste sculpteur	chef coutumier Tabwa	Chefferie village Tumpa
Albert	Kapepa	Ecrivain	Juriste	Collectif d'écrivains Libr'écriture
Feza	Kayungu	Opératrice culturelle	chercheuse en littérature	Centre d'art Waza
Denise	Maheho	Journaliste radio		Correspondante RFI et directrice éditoriale Waza Radio
Jacques	Makonga	Avocat		
Paul	Malaba	Artiste		
Douglas	Masamuna	Réalisateur	Opérateur culturel	DL Multimedia
Philippe	Mikobi	Historien de l'art		Musée National de Lubumbashi
Dorine	Mokha	Chorégraphe	Auteur	Art'Gument Project
Kady	Mpiana	Chorégraphe	Danseur	Harlem2Arts
Placide	Mukebo	Activiste	Expert en développement	Bureau Diocésain de développement
Rita	Mukebo	Artiste		
Olivier	Mulumbwa	Archéologue		Université de Lubumbashi
Ferdinand	Numbi Kanyepa	Chercheur	Activiste (Lusinga/tabwa)	Université de Lubumbashi / Groupe Murumbi
Godelive	Nyemba	Journaliste	Activiste (presse féminine)	La Guardia Magazine
Véronique	Poverello Kasongo	Opératrice culturelle	Coopération universitaire	Waza/ ULB
Nicole	Sapato	Educatrice	Historienne	Musée National de Lubumbashi
Costa	Tshinza	Critique d'art	Médecin	Habari RDC
Hubert	Tshiswaka	Activiste des droits humains	Avocat	Institut de Recherche en Droits Humains
Antoine	Tshitungu	Chercheur	Ecrivain	Université de Lubumbashi
Simplice	Zaidi	Chercheur	Activiste	Groupe Murumbi

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Note méthodologique et premiers résultats de MRAC dans HOME

Introduction

Pour une introduction générale nous conseillons l'introduction au projet d'HOME sur le site web de l'Africamuseum :

https://www.africamuseum.be/fr/research/discover/projects/prj_detail?prjid=718

Cette note résume d'abord les objectifs et responsabilités de MRAC dans le projet d'HOME. Par après nous avons essayé de résumer les premiers résultats du projet pour chaque objectif. Nous sommes conscients que dans un projet scientifique fédéral tel que HOME, de nombreuses sensibilités ont été oubliées lors de la préparation du projet. S'il est clair que le vocabulaire doit être adapté, c'est un fait important à prendre en compte dans les recommandations du MRAC à la fin du projet.

Lors de la rédaction des recommandations pour le gouvernement belge, il semble approprié de jeter un regard critique sur les visions du projet, mais aussi formuler ensemble avec l'équipe HOME en Belgique et en RDC des recommandations concernant les possibilités de restitution pour notre gouvernement belge.

1/ Inventaire des « collections » de restes humains

Les partenaires (IRSNB, INCC, MRAH, MRAC, ULB, USL, UM) dresseront un inventaire de toutes les collections de restes humains détenues par les partenaires et d'autres collections publiques et privées.

Cela comprend les collections de restes humains découverts dans des sites archéologiques, les restes humains collectés à des fins de comparaison, les collections de restes humains présentant des modifications anthropiques et enfin la collection de spécimens anatomiques (dissections, spécimens plastinés, collections humides).

Résultat intermédiaire // L'inventaire des restes humains au MRAC est toujours en cours en raison des restrictions imposées par le COVID. Au MRAC, des restes humains sont conservés au département d'anthropologie culturelle et d'histoire et au département de biologie.

La majeure partie de l'inventaire des anciennes collections d'anthropologie anatomique a été réalisée en collaboration avec l'IRSNB, étant donné le transfert de cette sous-collection aux IRSNB en 1964.

- Nous avons identifiés des personnes sur base de leur nom (exemple Iwa N'Gombe Lusinga).
- Nous avons étudiés plusieurs parties de cette collection en focalisant sur l'anthropologie physique.

Les restes humains au MRAC sont dispersés dans les collections ethnographiques, archéologiques, vertébrées et zoologiques. L'inventaire des restes humains des collections ethnographiques a été réalisé. L'inventaire et l'étude des documents d'acquisition des collections archéologiques, vertébrées et zoologiques est en cours.

- Nous avons identifiés plus qu'une trentaine de restes humains qui sont toujours présent dans les différentes collections.
- Nous tenons compte des 8 morts à Tervuren, respectivement en 1897 et 1958 et les 8 morts à Anvers à 1894.

2/ Valeur historique scientifique et politique des « collections » de restes humains

Nous prévoyons de poursuivre les recherches sur les différentes trajectoires des restes humains au sein des archives historiques coloniales (MRAC, Archives nationales).

Nous avons l'intention de faire des recherches sur maximum deux cas d'études, ainsi qu'un aperçu global des informations sur la provenance provisoire des restes humains provenant des anciens territoires belges d'outre-mer.

Résultat intermédiaire // Le MRAC a identifié différents cas d'études basés sur des données d'archives et des dossiers d'acquisition des anciennes collections d'anthropologie anatomique. Les différents cas d'études sont liés aux « donateurs » de restes humains et à leur micro-histoire. Les études de cas identifiées fournissent des données utiles sur les différents modes de collecte. Une étude de cas se concentre sur l'agent colonial Fernand Van den Ginste qui a recueilli environ un tiers de l'ancienne collection d'anthropologie anatomique du MRAC. Nous examinons différentes archives afin de reconstituer sa biographie en relation avec la pratique de la collecte de restes humains à des fins anthropométriques.

Nous considérons les recherches existantes sur les différents expéditeurs et expéditions pendant le temps colonial (Hutereau, Storms ; Cabra, ...) et les trajectoires des objets collectés par les acteurs coloniaux pour contribuer aux résultats de HOME.

3/ Créer le dialogue et la cocréation

En établissant des relations durables avec les membres de la diaspora en Belgique, les universités congolaises, les musées, les décideurs, les experts locaux et les familles et individus concernés, l'objectif est de créer un dialogue et un débat (réseau) sur le rapatriement.

Résultat intermédiaire I / En raison des restrictions imposées par COVID 19, le choix a été fait de passer par des partenaires congolais qui opèrent en RDC. En raison de l'instabilité politique persistante à la fin de 2020 et des restrictions imposées par COVID, les réunions préliminaires, ainsi que les entretiens prévus, ont été retardés en RDC.

MRAC a établi deux partenariats, l'un à Kinshasa avec le Collectif Faire-Part, un ensemble de réalisateurs de documentaire, et l'autre à Lubumbashi avec WAZA, un centre culturel, jouant un rôle central dans le débat public sur la restitution en RDC.

WAZA a mené des entretiens avec au moins 25 parties prenantes et a créé un groupe de discussion avec la participation de l'un des descendants d'Iwa Ng'ombe Lusinga (chef local tué par l'explorateur colonial Emile Storms en 1884).

Le Collectif Faire Part a contacté une vingtaine de parties prenantes, dont des universitaires, des experts en muséologie, des décideurs politiques et un représentant de l'UNESCO, tous basés à Kinshasa.

Résultat intermédiaire II/ Concernant le dialogue et le débat sur le rapatriement avec la diaspora africaine, le MRAC a organisé des réunions préliminaires avec trois acteurs de la société civile engagés dans le débat sociétale autour la restitution d'objets culturels et/ou le rapatriement de restes humains.

- L'équipe HOME du MRAC a établi une première présentation de HOME et un plan d'action avec les services publics pour organiser d'autres consultations en 2021.
- Ces consultations ont confirmé la nécessité d'un échange et d'une transparence accrue avec les experts de la société civile.
- Leur expertise concernant la valeur sociale des restes humains est importante pour l'élaboration des recommandations du rapport final.

4/ Évaluation des implications multiples du rapatriement

- Le rapatriement des restes humains est une question complexe, qui suscite de multiples points de vue contradictoires et donne lieu à de multiples résultats : non restitution, restitution physique ou virtuelle, incorporation dans des collections de musées/universités à l'étranger, réinhumation, etc.
- Le retour des restes humains aux membres de la famille, aux instituts ou aux États concernés implique d'abord que les origines des restes humains soient connues.

Résultat intermédiaire/ Le MRAC a établi des consultations avec des experts internationaux et nationaux concernant les voies possibles de restitution/rapatriement et la recherche de la provenance.

- Des consultations avec le professeur Charles-Didier Gondola (Université de l'Indiana), le professeur Sarah Van Beurden (Université de l'Ohio), le professeur Bénédicte Savoy (Technische Universität Berlin), la chercheuse Yasmina Zian (Université de Neuchâtel), le professeur Victoria Gibbon (Université de Cape Town), les chercheurs Lärissa Förster et Yann Le Gall (CARAM Berlin) ont été organisées en 2020 et 2021.
- Les consultations avec différents experts nationaux et internationaux se poursuivront en 2021 avec une enquête sur les voies (alternatives) de restitution et la recherche de provenance.
- Le MRAC a assuré le suivi du débat académique sur la restitution en Europe et a participé aux conférences et webinaires, comme 'Caring Matters // Centre de recherche sur la culture matérielle' ; Provenance globale // Palais de Rumine ; Anthro - Responsabilité // musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac ; ...

Responsabilité 5/ Cas d'études des restes humains identifiables et non-identifiables

Il peut s'agir de restes humains non identifiés provenant de différentes origines géographiques, mais aussi de restes humains non identifiés à des fins d'enseignement médical et anthropologique.

Résultats intermédiaire / Des recherches dans les archives ont été effectuées sur l'Inventaire général du Musée du Congo (collections d'anthropologie anatomique).

Nous avons d'une part identifié les donateurs et les détenteurs dans le cadre de cet inventaire et d'autre part identifié au moins cinq personnes dans le registre général du Musée du Congo. Ces individus seront examinés plus en détail dans la seconde moitié du projet.

Beaucoup de ces collections sont des restes non identifiés et ont été rassemblées par les différentes institutions pour faire une analyse scientifique comparative.

Le MRAC a étudié les dossiers AA (les dossiers d'acquisition) et s'est penché sur le cas de Van den Ginste. Ce cas concerne presque 200 personnes non identifiables. La recherche de provenance partagée sur des individus non identifiables, avec l'autorisation et en collaboration avec les pays et les communautés d'origine, pourrait éventuellement conduire à des individus plus identifiables.

Les recherches menées par Maarten Couttenier sur la provenance d'Iwa Ng'ombe Lusinga, ainsi les recherches de Allen Roberts, le groupe de Murumbi à l'Université de Lubumbashi et les recherches journalistiques de Michel Bouffieux serviront de base d'apprentissage sur la recherche de la provenance pour d'autres cas.

Cette présentation qui fait suite aux différentes rencontres auxquelles j'ai eu l'opportunité de participer, à l'invitation des membres du personnel du MRAC dans le cadre du projet HOME, se doit d'être traitée en se plaçant au départ de trois angles que sont l'éthique, le juridique et le politique

ance du volet éthique

La remise en perspective dans les domaines culturel- en ayant en vue les rapports de force lors des échanges qui ont fait que l'on en arrive en ce moment à aborder les questions qui portent sur ce que l'on est convenu de nommer « les restes humains »-, devrait pouvoir être le maître-mot. Et pour cause. Tout le monde, quelle que soit sa culture, fait un jour l'expérience de la perte d'un être cher. Mais les réactions sont différentes d'une personne à une autre. Hormis les différences individuelles, on note également des rituels et des habitudes spécifiques qui émanent d'une culture et/ou d'une religion en particulier.

Dans la mesure où l'on est prêt à admettre l'importance que revêt le travail de la mémoire pour les personnes et les membres de la famille de la personne qui décède, il sera envisageable de parler de la restitution de ce que l'on nomme « les restes humains ».

ance du volet juridique

C'est en se basant sur le principe de la dignité humaine que l'on retrouve dans la Constitution belge que l'on considère, que s'agissant de la restitution des « restes humains », la Belgique dispose à ce jour d'un mécanisme qui rendra possible la prise en compte du volet juridique de la restitution 'des restes humains'. Par ailleurs, est-il besoin de le rappeler à nos mémoires le fait que la Belgique, en tant que l'un des Etats membres des Nations Unies, a l'obligation de respecter les engagements qu'elle a pris lorsque qu'elle a ratifié cet instrument juridique international, qui met le respect de la dignité humaine comme un des principes des droits fondamentaux.

ortance de la prise en compte du volet politique

La Belgique aura à s'efforcer d'amorcer un dialogue au niveau politique et dans le cadre de ce dialogue, aura à veiller à une mise en perspective historique des relations entre la RDC et la Belgique

Communiqué de presse : Pour le rapatriement des dépouilles des ancêtres congolais

Cher.e.s journalistes,

Nous vous invitons à notre conférence de presse sur les dépouilles des ancêtres congolais qui se tiendra le mardi 8 novembre à partir de 10h00, au musée de Tervuren, située à Leuvensesteenweg 13, Tervuren 3080. Cette conférence de presse se tiendra en présence des artistes congolais du Collectif Faire-Part et du Centre d'art Waza, qui ont réalisé des consultations auprès de différentes personnes, en RDC, à travers des interviews. Celles-ci portaient toutes sur le sujet des dépouilles des ancêtres congolais.es présent.e.s en Belgique.

Pourquoi cette conférence de presse maintenant ?

À l'AfricaMuseum, dans d'autres musées et institutions en Belgique, ainsi que dans certaines collections privées, sont gardées des dépouilles d'ancêtres congolais.es massacré.e.s et déporté.e.s par les autorités coloniales belges. Certaines de ces dépouilles sont celles de personnes ayant été décapitées lors de combats les opposant aux colons, d'autres sont celles de personnes mortes de faim, de maladies après avoir été forcées à venir en Belgique pour être exposées comme des animaux. Les dépouilles présentes en Belgique font partie des millions de victimes de la barbarie de la colonisation.

Elles ont été découpées et étudiées comme des animaux de laboratoire, sous le prétexte de l'analyse scientifique, réduites ainsi à du matériel didactique. Ce même matériel a servi de fondement aux théories de racialisation qui, aujourd'hui encore, influencent notre regard sur l'autre.

Aujourd'hui, il est temps que toutes ces victimes soient connues du grand public, leur histoire racontée, que le gouvernement belge reconnaisse explicitement ces crimes et que les dépouilles soient rapatriées au Congo pour que les âmes des défunt.e.s puissent reposer en paix sur leur terre.

C'est pourquoi, nous, activistes décoloniales.ux de la société civile, nous demandons que justice soit faite pour les ancêtres congolais.es et que leur dignité soit restaurée :

« Mamans Sambo et Mpemba, Papas Ekia, Kitukwa, Midange et Nzau, bébé Juste Bonaventure Langa, vous qui êtes enterré.e.s à Tervuren, Sabo, Bitio, Isokoyé, Manguesse, Binda, Mangwanda et Pezo, vous qui êtes en terré.e.s au Schoonselhof à Anvers, loin de vos terres, vous avez été forcé.e.s à venir en Belgique, vous êtes mort.e.s de froid, de manque d'eau, de nourriture, de maladie faute de soins adéquats parce que la Belgique avait décidé d'occuper vos terres, de chasser, tuer ses habitantes et d'exploiter des travailleur.euse.s pour enrichir de grandes sociétés belges et étrangères.

« Chef Lusinga et d'autres résistants, vous avez eu le courage et la force de vous opposer à cette con-quête militaire barbare, votre résistance a conduit l'autorité coloniale à vous couper la tête et faire venir une partie de votre dépouille en Belgique.

Et bien d'autres ancêtres encore inconnu-e-s. »

Depuis le 15 décembre 2019, l'État belge a mis en place le projet « Home » dont les résultats annoncés par l'AfricaMuseum visent à « *réaliser une évaluation multidisciplinaire des collections des restes humains en Belgique [...], les rapports détailleront la façon de gérer les diverses collections des restes humains* 1 ». Le projet se terminera fin décembre 2022, soit à la même période que se clôture la commission parlementaire sur le passé colonial belge au Congo, Rwanda et Burundi.

À la veille de l'issue de ce projet, nous déplorons le fait que la majorité des dépouilles n'ont pas été identifiées et rendues publiques, le fait que l'histoire de ces femmes et hommes reste manquante et le fait que les moyens humains et financiers pour réaliser ce travail n'ont pas été à la hauteur des besoins pour réaliser ce travail de mémoire.

Au regard des consultations lancées par le musée via le collectif Faire-part de Kinshasa et le Centre d'art Waza de Lubumbashi, des discussions qui en ressortent notamment avec la diaspora en Belgique et des actions plus qu'urgentes à mettre sur pied, entre autres recommandations, nous demandons au gouvernement belge et à son Secrétaire d'État, Thomas Dermine :

- de prolonger le projet Home et de lui allouer les moyens humains et financiers pour que dans un délai d'un an, toutes les victimes soient connues et leurs dépouilles rapatriées ;
- de veiller à ne pas reproduire en RDC ce qui se fait ici ; ce sont des corps d'ancêtres qui méritent le respect et le repos en paix sur leur terre ;
- de mettre en place un groupe de travail pour décoloniser la pensée et le langage utilisé par les différent·e·s acteur·rice·s du projet HOME ;
- de diffuser publiquement l'évolution du projet durant sa poursuite, tant en Belgique qu'en RDC, au Rwanda et au Burundi ;
- de réaliser une brochure (et autres supports d'information) destinée au grand public et racontant l'histoire de ces défunt·e·s sans sépulture.
- qu'après le rapatriement des défunt·e·s sur la terre des leurs, la Belgique finance, sous l'initiative des communautés congolaises (RDC et diaspora), et en lien avec les initiatives similaires menées au Congo, ait lieu la construction de statutaires, stèles honorifiques ou œuvres artistiques (en priorité d'artistes d'origine congolaise ou plus largement africaine) aux endroits symboliques de leur captivité.

Programme :

10h : Accueil (devant l'entrée du musée, à l'intérieur du parc).

10h15 : Visite guidée explicative sur les ancêtres autour des étangs et des tombes (Parc de Tervuren)

11h à 12h : Conférence de presse à l'AfricaMuseum. Rendez-vous à l'entrée du musée.

En cas d'impossibilité, la conférence de presse pourra être suivie de en ligne.

Pour une meilleure organisation, nous vous remercions de nous confirmer votre présence par e-mail ou par téléphone.

Contact presse : +32 476 90 26 75 / +32 492 76 24 21

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