



# International Symposium

November 7 and 8, 2024

## Provenance, reparations and restitutions

*African human remains from the German colonial period in the collections of the University of Strasbourg*

Crossed perspectives

*Organized by the Lab for interdisciplinary cultural studies LinCS, UMR 7069 (ProHumStra project), The Franco-German Research Fund on the Provenance of Cultural Objects from sub-Saharan Africa (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin) and the French Embassy in Tanzania*

**Working languages: French-English**

**Location: Conference room**

Maison Interuniversitaire des Sciences de l'Homme – Alsace (MISHA)  
5, allée du Général Rouvillois, 67000 Strasbourg

**Link to the video-conference**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MISHAlsace>

## Concept

This symposium is part of the ProHumStra project (2024-2026), **“Reconnecting human remains and cultural objects: Provenance research and the re-humanization of ancestral remains from former German colonies in Africa at the University of Strasbourg”** funded by the **French Ministry of Culture and the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM)** through the Franco-German Research Fund on the Provenance of Cultural Objects from sub-Saharan Africa (Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin).

ProHumStra aims to shed light on the provenance of ancestral remains from a specific collection at the University of Strasbourg marked by a Franco-German past: between 1892 and 1911, during the German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, when the University of Strasbourg had become the *Kaiser-Wilhelms-Universität*, 135 human remains from at the time German colonies in Africa: German East Africa, *Kamerun*, German South West Africa and Togo, entered the University’s Institute of Anatomy. ProHumStra has **three main research aims: 1) Grasp Franco-German-African relations** at play in provenance research **by departing from a collection in Alsace; 2) Enhance provenance research by trying to re-connect ancestral remains and cultural materials** that have been **collected concomitantly; 3) Take provenance research as far as possible and seek to reconstruct the biographies** and the **social, cultural and economic backgrounds** of persons whose bodily remains are housed in Strasbourg. The **overarching aim** of this project is to contribute to a “re-humanization” (Rassool 2015) of ancestral remains from former colonies and to a shift of perspective enabling African populations to reappropriate their past, however painful and traumatic, and to rethink the post-colony (Bachir Diagne & Amselle 2018).

ProHumStra will mainly rely on archival research and oral history. A collaboration with museums, especially the *Museum Fünf Kontinente* in Munich and the *Musée des Civilisations du Cameroun* in Dschang will be essential in order to try to connect ancestral remains to cultural objects. ProHumStra will further contribute to student training at the intersection between universities and museums: a master’s class in museology at the University of Strasbourg and students from Tanzania will create an exhibition on ancestral remains and cultural materials, through which the project results will be made accessible to a non-academic public. The results of ProHumStra will further be accessible through the open access publications of one special journal issue, one edited volume and through the organization of three conferences in Strasbourg, Munich and Dschang. An interdisciplinary team of 16 researchers and museum professionals in Cameroon, France, Germany and Tanzania will conduct this project. Exploratory research, past collaborations between some of the team members as well as various fallback solutions in cases of emerging difficulties ensure the feasibility of this project. Data managers and an ethical committee will also counsel the team in ways to overcome possible ethical problems, to comply with relevant legislations, but also in ways to make diverse data accessible to a wider public. This project can have a significant political and social impact: it can pave the way for restitutions of ancestral remains from Strasbourg to Africa, give insights on ways to concretely implement the recently enacted French law on restitutions of human remains, and elaborate suggestions on how to develop the planned French law on the restitution of cultural goods illicitly appropriated, by departing from crossed perspectives between African countries, France and Germany.

***This symposium received financial support from the French Embassy in Tanzania and the University of Strasbourg***

# Conference programme

7 November 2024

**9:00-9:30: Welcome of the participants**

9:30-9:45: Opening speech by Professor **Mathieu Schneider**, Vice-President, Culture, Science-Society and Solidarity Actions; Chairman of the Scientific Council on Collections of African Human Remains, University of Strasbourg

9:45-9:50: **Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom**, coordinator of the ProHumStra project, University of Strasbourg

## ***Human remains: ethical issues for the University of Strasbourg and international perspectives***

**Chair: Roger Somé** (University of Strasbourg)

9:50-10:50: Keynote by **Ciraj Rassool** (Director of the Department of Historical Studies, University of the Western Cape), *Restitution and rehumanisation*

10:50-11:20: **Richard Hölzl** (Museum Fünf Kontinente - München -, Provenance researcher, historian), *Reuniting human remains and cultural artefacts? The Berké holdings at the Five Continents Museum Munich in a wider context* (by videoconferencing)

**11:20-11:30: Coffee break**

## **Panel 1: Trying to bridge the gap between institutions and communities: Transnational experiences departing from Old Moshi, Tanzania**

**Chair: Elise Pape** (University of Strasbourg)

11:30-11:45: **Mnyaka Sururu Mboro** (Berlin Postkolonial), *Searching for Mangi Meli and looted ancestral remains: Transnational activism*

11:45-12:00: **Gabriel Mzei Orio** (Director and Founder of Old Moshi Cultural Tourism), *From traces of colonial violence to historical guided tours and collaborations with German actors regarding restitutions*

12:00-12:15: **Konradin Kunze** (Exhibition maker, researcher, theatre director and performer, Flinn Works), *From "Mangi Meli remains" to "Marejesho": Artistic provenance research* (by videoconferencing)

12:15-13:00: **Discussion**

**13.00-15:00: Break**

## **Panel 2: (Re)-uniting ancestral remains and cultural materials in scattered collections: getting through colonial archives**

**Chair: Ciraj Rassool** (University of the Western Cape)

15:00-15.15: **Elise Pape** (Researcher, University of Strasbourg), *Ancestral remains from Africa at Institute of Anatomy of the University of Strasbourg: Challenging today national borders*

15:15-15.30: **Valence Silayo** (Lecturer at the department of archaeology and heritage studies, University of Dar es Salaam and Linden Museum - Stuttgart), *Colonial archive vs ancestral remains and cultural goods: Search for evidence of acquisition and ownership*

15.30-15.45: **Nancy Rushohora** (Lecturer at the department of archaeology and heritage studies, University of Dar es Salaam), *Looted human remains: A window to reading the archives against and along the grains* (by videoconferencing)

15:45-16:30: **Discussion**

**16:30-16:40: Coffee break**

## **Panel 3: Wider cultural and historical contexts of restitution in Tanzania**

**Chair: Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom** (University of Strasbourg)

16:40-17:10: **Reginald Kirey** (Lecturer at the Department of History, University of Dar es Salaam), *Historical and cultural contexts of restitution movements in Tanzania: 1930s to the present*

17:10-17:40: **Jan Kuever** (Senior Lecturer - University of Iringa - and Director of Fahari Yetu), *From haggling over objects and bones to a decolonial knowledge transfer: Lessons from fahari yetu and Iringa Boma*

17:40-18:10: **Jimson Sanga** (Lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Tourism - University of Iringa - and Assitant Director of Fahari Yetu), *Colonial echoes: Hehe narratives of Mkwavinyika Mwamuyinga and ancestral remains*

18:10-18:40: **Corinne Hershkovitch** (Lawyer specialized in restitutions and provenance research - Paris), *Provenance research: For an empirical approach of restitutions of human remains*

# 8 November 2024

## ***Epistemological foundations and perspectives of restitutions: the gaze of the Other...***

**8:00: Arrival of the participants**

### **Panel 4: Ancestral remains from Cameroon**

**Chair: Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom** (University of Strasbourg)

8:30-9:00: **Sylvain Djache Nzefa** (Le musée des civilisations du Cameroun – Dschang -, General coordinator of the NGO La route des chefferies), *Ritual objects and spaces for dialogue with the dead*

9:00-9:20: **Léa Lili Kemegne Simo** (Lecturer in history University of Douala), *From one paradigm to another: Is restituting enough?* (by videoconferencing)

9:20-9:50: **Yann LeGall** (Post-doctoral researcher at the Institute of Art History, Technical University of Berlin), *Eight "punitive" expeditions: Theodor Berké's military role in German Cameroon* (by videoconferencing)

9:50-10:10: **Henry Kam Kah** (Associate Professor of history, University of Buea), *Community engagement in the restitution of looted cultural objects and human remains from Cameroon* (by videoconferencing)

**10:20-10.30: Coffee break**

### **Closing panel 5: Restitutions of ancestral remains: concluding perspectives**

**Chair: Valence Silayo** (University of Dar es Salaam)

10:30-11:00: **Roger Somé** (Philosopher and professor of ethnology, responsible for the ethological collection, University of Strasbourg), *Human remains or cultural property and museums facing the challenges of restitution in an African context*

11:00-11:30: **Andreas Mehler** (Director of the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute; Director of the Africa Centre for Transregional Research, University of Freiburg), *Freiburg's embarrassing University-based Alexander Ecker collection – background, entanglements, way forward*

11:30-12:00: **Martial Guédron** (Professor of art history, University of Strasbourg), *Faces and Skulls: physiognomy, phrenology and photography in the age of physical anthropology*

12:00-12:30: **Stefanie Michels** (Professor of history, University of Düsseldorf), *Ancestors and Their Return – Examining Human Remains from Colonial Contexts*

12:30-13:00: Symposium conclusion: **Aggée Célestin Lomo Myazhiom** (Associate professor, historian and socio-anthropologist, University of Strasbourg), *Human remains of the colonial era: history and memory between Africa and Alsace. Negritude, creolization and “métissage”...*

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### Organizing committee

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### How to get to the MISHA (Maison Interuniversitaire des Sciences de l'Homme)

**From Strasbourg's main train station:** Take the tram C towards Neuhof Rodolphe Reuss. Get off at the stop “Observatoire”

