

# Human Remains from the Former German Colony of East Africa

Recontextualization and  
Approaches for Restitution

Herausgegeben von Bernhard Heeb  
und Charles Mulinda Kabwete

REFECTION DE CETTE SOURCE EN SOUVENIR  
DU DUC ALLEMAND  
ADOLF FRIEDRICH ZU MECKLENBURG  
QUI AVEC SON EXPEDITION SCIENTIFIQUE  
S'Y EST DESALTERE EN SEPTEMBRE 1907.

SEPTEMBRE 1907

böhlau



Museum für Vor- und  
Frühgeschichte  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin





# HUMAN REMAINS FROM THE FORMER GERMAN COLONY OF EAST AFRICA

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Für das Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte,  
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, herausgegeben von  
Bernhard Heeb und Charles Mulinda Kabwete

**BÖHLAU VERLAG**  
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Umschlagabbildungen: Plaque at the source of the Mpenge stream in Rwanda. ©Maurice Mugabowagahunde

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## PREFACE

This publication presents the results of a research project which is probably unique in this form: In the course of only two years, the provenances of approximately 1100 sets of Human Remains from the territory of the present-day nations of Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda were examined. The stated aim was to enable repatriation to the countries of origin, provided that such a course was also desired by them. Scientists from Rwanda played an important role in this research, and the present volume is largely a joint publication. This endeavour was only made possible by the generous support of the Gerda Henkel Foundation.

How then did this project come about? In 2011, the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) took over a large anthropological collection belonging to the Charité in Berlin. The Charité was unable to guarantee an appropriate and dignified safekeeping, and the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, as the largest institution in Germany dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage, felt that it had a certain responsibility under these circumstances. The collection encompasses portions of various historical collections of Human Remains which were mainly compiled in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A major part of the inventory, mostly skulls, comes from the so-called ‘S-collection’ which Felix von Luschan assembled at the turn of the century. Other remains belong to the skull collection of the former anatomical institute of the Charité, a collection complex compiled by the Charité for research purposes, and from other smaller collections. After the First World War, further Human Remains were only rarely acquired for these collections, and scientific interest in them also declined significantly. Over time, they gradually fell into oblivion.

The condition of the collection was very poor when it was acquired by the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*. The first priority for the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (Museum of Pre- and Early History), which took on the task of managing the collection within the *Staatliche Museen der Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (National Museums of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), was to safely store the inventory, to house it in a dignified manner, and to make it accessible for research through adequate presentation, examination, and (at least in part) renewed cataloguing.

It soon became clear that a significant part of the acquired collection originated from colonial contexts. This clearly demanded consequences concerning the further handling of the remains. By clarifying their origins through comprehensive provenance research, a foundation was to be laid as quickly as possible in order to enter into a dialogue with the countries of origin and, if desired, to initiate the process of repatriation. To this end, it was essential to shed more light on the exact origin of the Human Remains and the circumstances of their acquisition. Due to the size of the collection, it proved impossible to examine the entire collection at once. For this reason, groups of objects were formed according to their geographical origin, and these will now be studied successively. For the first group, the



focus was placed on Human Remains from East Africa, which was largely under German colonial rule at the time of acquisition. The Human Remains which are examined in this volume come from Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya.

Unfortunately, no budgetary resources were available for this substantial and important task. With the Gerda Henkel Foundation, however, we were able to gain a partner who not only generously provided the necessary funds, but with whom we were in complete agreement regarding the goals and framework conditions of the research: it was to lay the foundations for repatriation and – this was very important to both sides – it was to be carried out with the involvement of representatives of the countries of origin. In this type of research project, it is important to avoid a one-sided European perspective on historical events and to include the knowledge and expertise of scientists from the countries of origin in the joint research. In addition, such projects can lay the foundation for a long-term cooperation which promotes the exchange of knowledge and in which mutual understanding can develop, something which has often been lacking in the past.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Dr. Charles Mulinda Kabwete of the University of Rwanda and his team of scientists. Without their cooperation and without the commitment and expertise of our Rwandan colleagues, this publication would lack an essential dimension. We are extremely glad that a meeting with colleagues from Rwanda, Tanzania, South Africa, Namibia, and Cameroon was held in Kigali at the end of 2019, which allowed the research results to be presented and discussed. This conference was also a valuable step towards the creation of the publication now before you. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Flower Manase from the Tanzanian National Museum, who provided important input to our research on Tanzania during the 2019 meeting in Kigali.

We are currently engaged in an active dialogue with the countries of origin, namely Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya, on the question of how they would prefer to deal with the respective Human Remains in the future. We are, of course, prepared to return them, as we have emphasised on several occasions, including talks with the representatives of the three countries. However, we are aware that such an offer from the German side will also trigger discussion processes in the countries of origin, and that these may take some time. We, for our part, will always be available for the necessary deliberations.

For us, the next step will be to focus on the research regarding the origin and acquisition circumstances of the Human Remains from West Africa. This project is generously funded by the *Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien*. This will be followed by research on Human Remains from other parts of Africa and from areas in the Pacific Ocean which were temporarily under German colonial rule (e.g. Samoa, Papua New Guinea). For all of our future work, we desire and aspire to a close and equal cooperation with researchers from the various countries of origin.

Prof. Dr. Hermann Parzinger  
President of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation

## INTRODUCTION

We believe that this publication comes at the right moment – a time of intense theoretical debate on the decolonisation of African memory and history, and a time when claims for the actual restitution of Human Remains, cultural artefacts, and colonial archives are being intensified. Scholars from both the former colonising and former colonised worlds are now engaged in a joint effort to revisit the history of colonialism. Their aim is not only to uncover the past, but also to provide a foundation for claims in the present. In doing this, they are writing a new history, one which combines rigorous scientific methods with activist approaches. Governments, universities, and museums expect these scholars to produce a body of new and sound knowledge which will enable our society to understand the complex realities of colonialism. This understanding can then be used in the preparation of claims for the restitution of Human Remains, objects, and documents.

When a number of leading European museums suggested the possibility of restitution, this move inaugurated a wave of negotiation processes between European and African leaders and cultural institutions. Five years ago, the Berlin Museum of Pre- and Early History decided to initiate such a process by entering into a collaboration with Rwanda, the country from which German scientists and military personnel took away a greater number of Human Remains than any of the other former German colonies. As a consequence, German and Rwandan scholars and museum staff began to work on a joint project that was aimed at reconstructing the provenance of the Human Remains which German explorers and ethnologists removed from Rwanda in the years 1907–1909.

This project has been a long journey. The German team visited Rwanda and met with Rwandan researchers in May 2018. In July of the same year, the Rwandan team went to Berlin to meet again with the German researchers, and to visit the actual location of the Human Remains from Rwanda (and other countries of origin). Some important questions surfaced during these encounters: Why were the 921 skulls and skeletons collected and then taken to Germany? How were they identified, selected, and appropriated in Rwanda, and then transported to Germany? Could the actual methods of acquisition be identified – and did they perhaps include the use of physical violence? What were the consequences of this dislocation and desecration of the bodies of their ancestors for the people of Rwanda? How were the Human Remains treated in Germany? And lastly, how was the decision to document and return the Human Remains reached in 2018?

In order to address these questions, Rwandan and German scholars embarked on a comprehensive and varied quest for data from archives, interviews, publications, and newspapers. This joint effort eventually produced the following nine chapters:

The first chapter provides an overview of the history of the anthropological collections now housed at Berlin's Museum of Pre- and Early History.

Chapters two through five focus on reconstructing the colonial context in which German scientists and military personnel came to collect the Rwandan Human Remains. They discuss the pervasive and complex character of colonial power, domination, and violence, and relate it to the justifications which were advanced for the appropriation of the Human Remains of colonised peoples.

The sixth chapter documents the specific provenance of the Rwandan Human Remains. It traces their origin regarding both the colonial and current names of documented locations. The recorded recollections of Rwandan elders about German colonial rule and Rwandans' colonial work experiences are also presented in this context. Finally, this section addresses specific issues related to persons which went missing during German rule, preserved memories about Human Remains, precolonial burial practices, and the influence of the colonialists on Rwandan burial traditions.

The seventh chapter complements the previous chapters with the results of the review of historical documents and contemporary sources, while the eighth chapter addresses the issues of the restitution, repatriation, reparation, and memorialisation of these Rwandan Human Remains. It is based on both quantitative and qualitative data which presents modern Rwandans' views on the above issues.

The two final chapters re-contextualise and re-localise the Human Remains from Tanzania and Kenya, again, on the basis of archival and other historical sources.

The collaboration between the German and Rwandan researchers has been very productive. The two groups worked together in the collection of fieldwork data, shared data with each other, wrote chapters together, and cross-checked each other's drafts. Both groups contributed several interdisciplinary skills, providing specialists in archaeology, history, political science, anthropology, and museum studies.

This book attempts to provide an explanation for what happened to the Human Remains from Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya. It also constitutes a reference guide for future activities in the context of the restitution of Rwandan Human Remains. Any future dialogue on the repatriation, reparation, and memorialisation of these Human Remains can now take into account the full range of experiences, opinions, and suggestions which we were able to document.

A workshop held in Kigali's Kandt House Museum in December 2019 provided a preliminary conclusion and climax for our project, which had been generously funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. In addition to the scientists which were directly involved in the project, a number of academics from Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa, and Cameroon also attended, and the event was open to students. This allowed us, for the first time, to present and discuss the results of the project on a larger scale. In this context, we would also like to thank Prof. Ciraj Rassool (Cape Town) and Dr. Flower Manese (Dar es Salaam), who provided us with sound advice throughout.

The results of our joint work now form the main part of the present publication. It is intended as a prelude to the further processing of the anthropological holdings which are still in the care of the museum in Berlin.

The extensive anthropological analyses in the context of the present provenance research were carried out by Barbara Teßmann. Due to the vast extent, her results will not be published in this book. They will appear elsewhere in close cooperation with colleagues from Rwanda and Tanzania.

Prof. Dr. Charles Mulinda Kabwete  
Dr. Bernhard Heeb



# 1. ON THE HISTORY OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS AT THE MUSEUM OF PRE- AND EARLY HISTORY

Bernhard Heeb

## Introduction

The following discussion focuses mainly on the so-called S-collection, assembled by Felix von Luschan (1854–1924) and originally established at the *Museum für Völkerkunde* (MfV; Ethnological Museum) of the *Königliche Museen zu Berlin* (Royal Museums of Berlin), and on the so-called *Rasseschädelsammlung* (RS; racial type skull collection) as a former part of the anatomical collection of the Charité. The history of the Rudolf Virchow Collection (RV) will also be dealt with, as it is likewise in the care of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* (SMB; National Museums of Berlin), albeit not as their property. To a relatively small extent, it was also the subject of provenance investigations.

The preliminary work for this section was mainly done by Dr. Ulrich Creutz, whom I would like to thank very much for providing an unpublished manuscript.<sup>1</sup> In mentioning Creutz, we have already entered the more recent history of the collection. Before the Human Remains were transferred from the Charité to the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (MVF; Museum of Pre- and Early History) as part of the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (SPK; Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) in 2010 and 2011, it was largely due to him and his tireless efforts that they were preserved and researched. He has also published or contributed to the history of the S- and RV-collections (Creutz 2006; Kunst and Creutz 2013). The most recent historical review of the RS-collection was carried out in 2013 by Andreas Winkelmann (Winkelmann 2013) as part of the ‘Charité Human Remains Project’.<sup>2</sup> In general, nothing needs to be added to the above-mentioned works. However, in order to shed light on the background of the present research, a renewed and, above all, brief overview is considered useful.

1 Typewritten BGAEU manuscript. Processing status: November 2010 and May 2011. Not numbered.

2 Funded by the German Research Foundation. Gesch.Z. WI 3697/1-1 and 1-2.

## The anatomical collection of the Charité

With over 800 skulls and some occasional postcranial skeletal remains, the RS-collection contains far fewer Human Remains than the S- or RV-collections. However, the beginning of the anatomical collection, to which the RS-collection originally belonged and which contained/contains far more specimens than skulls, dates back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear when exactly the collecting of skulls for anthropological research began. In 1810, Karl Asmund Rudolphi (1777–1832), the first professor for anatomy at the newly founded University of Berlin, first touched on the subject when he criticised the supposed fundamental lack of human skulls of ‘*verschiedene Völker*’ (different peoples) in his university anatomical collection (Winkelmann 2013: 75). Most of the subsequent anthropological and race research was carried out under Wilhelm Waldeyer (1836–1921), director of the Institute of Anatomy from 1883 to 1917, during whose time in office the collection of human skulls also experienced a last major acquisition surge (Winkelmann 2013: 77–80 and Tab. 2). His successors were far less interested in the collection, its maintenance, and its scientific analysis, a decrease which is probably related to the greatly changed general conditions after the First World War, but also to the fact that anatomical research now had a different focus. After the Second World War, this collection, like the S- and RV-collections, dropped out of the scientific focus completely.

## The S- and RV-collections of Felix von Luschan and Rudolf Virchow

The following sections will show that the S- and RV-collections are connected with each other through their collectors, Felix von Luschan and Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), both in terms of the subject matter and, in some ways, through the *Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (BGAEU; Berlin Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory). Although Waldeyer was also a member and chairman of this society, the RS-collection is often not perceived in this context. Anatomists at the Berlin Institute were probably seen as having a different perspective, which was more medical and pathological. However, the fact that both the methods and the questions regarding the respective ‘material’ were often similar or comparable is shown by the minutes of the regular meetings of the BGAEU, in which the Berlin Institute of Anatomy did regularly present research results.<sup>4</sup> Andreas Winkelmann rightly points out in this context (Winkelmann 2013: 81) that the acquisition of skulls for the anatomical collection was driven by the same motivation

<sup>3</sup> Apart from skeletal remains, the collection contained a much larger number of other specimens.

<sup>4</sup> Published on various occasions in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (ZfE; Journal of Ethnology), of which the BGAEU remains co-editor.



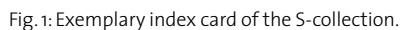
(and often had the same sources) as that of contemporaneous anthropologists. With an original inventory of 6064 osteological objects, the S-collection is the largest of its kind in Berlin.<sup>5</sup> Over 5500 of these items are preserved today, but what happened to the difference during the Second World War remains largely unexplained.

Felix von Luschan studied medicine in Vienna and anthropology in Paris before he became assistant director of the MfV in Berlin in 1885 at the age of 31. By decree of the Prussian Minister of Ecclesiastical, Educational, and Medicinal Affairs (Minister of Culture) of 17 January 1900, he was appointed Associate Professor of Anthropology and Ethnology at the Friedrich Wilhelm University. He nevertheless retained his position at the MfV (Univ.-UK-252: 3). In 1905, he was appointed Director of the Department of Africa and Oceania at the MfV by the same authority (Univ.-UK-252: 4), and in 1909, the Prussian Minister of Culture appointed him Full Professor of Physical Anthropology (Univ.-UK-252: 6). Teaching at the university was common practice for MfV scientists at the time, and was therefore not considered unusual. Von Luschan had already started to assemble a private anthropological *Lehrmittelsammlung* (L-collection; Teaching Material Collection) before his time in Berlin. He continued this work, but starting in 1885 he also began the *Schädelsammlung des Museums für Völkerkunde* (S-collection; Skull Collection of the Museum of Ethnology). The former inventory is now in the possession of the Natural History Museum in New York, to which it was sold in 1924 by von Luschan's widow. Von Luschan repeatedly emphasised the formal separation of the two collections (e.g. SMB-PK, EM, I B 39 vol. 1, E 1708/1906), but in practise, the acquisition process shows that this was not always strictly adhered to in financial terms. More frequently, skulls financed by private means would be transferred to the S-collection, mostly because there was no budget for the development of this collection.<sup>6</sup> Most of the items in the S-collection, however, come from donated property of private individuals, or state ventures such as the German Navy Expedition of 1905–1907, or the East Africa Expedition of the Duke of Mecklenburg in 1907/08 (which provided a significant part of the skulls discussed in this publication). Skulls were also given directly to von Luschan by soldiers of the German troops stationed in the colonies. A decree was issued by the Minister for Spiritual, Educational, and Medicinal Affairs on 03 August 1889 with regard to state ventures. The *'Anweisung betreffend der aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten eingehenden wissenschaftlichen Sendungen'* (Instructions concerning scientific shipment from German protectorates) stated that these were first to be submitted to the MfV for selection. A *Sachverständigen-Kommission* (Commission of Experts) then decided on the destinations for the ethnological and anthropological objects in Berlin itself or, if appropri-

5 This number also includes some 300 zoological skulls and preparations.

6 An exemplary reference to this circumstance can be found in SMB-PK, EM, I B 39 vol. 2, E 2074/1907.

7 These orders were only binding for non-private travelling and collecting personnel (SMB-PK, EM, I B n/a, E1157/1889).



ate, on their transfer to other institutions throughout the German Empire. Correspondence also shows that von Luschan insisted strongly on compliance with these instructions (SMB-PK, EM, I B 24, E 10/1903). This practise was one of the main reasons why the S-collection was able to grow to over 6000 pieces within a relatively few years. The archives of the Ethnological Museum show clearly which accessions were obtained, as von Luschan documented and archived them quite meticulously. For each of the skulls, there was a foldable, double-sided printed index card marked with an inventory number. Of the formerly c. 6064 index cards, only 309 still exist today. There is no trace of a – possible – inventory book. This lack of primary documentation is likely due to wartime losses. After von Luschan had been appointed a full professor in 1909 and given the statutory chair of anthropology in 1911 – he was at the same time relieved of his ethnological duties in the MfV – the ethnological and anthropological collections were separated. The S-collection remained at the MfV, but unlike the ethnological collection, it was still under von Luschan's control (SMB-PK, EM, I B n/a, E 120a/1911). The following years were characterised by a lack of space, personnel, and institutional support by the MfV. Due to a situation which remained ultimately unstable, von Luschan was not able to use the collected material according to his scientific needs. An increasing 'alienation' between the museums and von Luschan was also reflected in a 1920 statement by their general director, Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), which referred to von Luschan's stated requirements for a relocation of the S-collection: '[...] *dass die Wünsche*

*Professors von Luschan mit den Zielen und Aufgaben der Museumsverwaltung nur in sehr loser Verbindung stehen. Es handelt sich hier ganz überwiegend um Universitätsinteressen*’ [...] that the wishes of Professor von Luschan are only loosely connected with the goals and tasks of museum administration. They are predominantly university interests) (SMB-PK, EM, I c vol. 15, E 820/1920). In the same letter, von Bode clearly stated that *‘die Museumsverwaltung jederzeit bereit ist, dieses [anthropologische] Material abzugeben*’ (the museum administration is prepared at any time to hand over this [anthropological] material). Von Luschan’s health forced him to stay away from Berlin, and no satisfactory solution for the storage situation had been found at the time of his death in 1924. At this point, the MfV was keen to hand over the S-collection to the university in order to ease their own pressing spatial requirements. In 1925, the collection came into the possession of the Pathological Museum of the Friedrich Wilhelm University, where it was placed in the care of Otto Lubarsch (1860–1933) (SMB-PK, EM, I B 39 vol. 5, E 103/1925; Univ.-UK-362). A receipt for the transfer of documents belonging to the collection also speaks of, among other things, a *‘Katalog über Weichteile*’ (catalogue of soft tissue), a *‘Katalog über Knochen*’ (catalogue of bones) or a *‘Katalog der Gipsabgüsse*’ (catalogue of plaster casts) (SMB-PK, EM, I B 39 vol. 5, E 103/1925: 3). None of these catalogues has been preserved, and they must all be considered war losses (see above). However, as early as the beginning of 1928, the S-collection was passed on to the newly founded *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* (KWI-A; Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Genetics, and Eugenics) in Dahlem, which was under the direction of the (thereafter) Nazi eugenicist Eugen Fischer (1874–1967). The anthropologist Hans Weinert (1887–1967) became directly responsible for the S-collection and a separate anthropological collection at the KWI-A.<sup>8</sup> However, the available documents do not reveal in what way the collections were used, or the extent and later fate of any acquisitions under Weinert. He eventually moved on to the Department of Anthropology at Kiel University in 1935. After he left, the anthropological collections at the KWI-A appear to have been orphaned and without a direct supervisor. In 1938, a smaller part of the S-collection was scheduled to be transferred to the University of Königsberg; permission from the Ministry of Education had already been granted (Kunst and Creutz 2013: 97, note 46) (AMPG – I. Abt., Rep. 1 A, Nr. 2399: correspondence between Eugen Fischer and the Ministry of Science, Pedagogy and National Education). Whether the transfer actually took place remains unclear. However, this event would seem to suggest that Fischer did not attach significant value to the S-collection. Due to the Second World War and the deteriorating course of events from 1942/43 onwards, the evacuation of collection objects became a priority. In the early summer of 1943, the S-collection was packed into 79 crates and moved to the cellars of the *Schlosshotel Freyenstein* (Castle Hotel Freyenstein) in northern Brandenburg (Univ.-UK-1221, Luftschutz 1943: 49). Their eventual return to Berlin remains unexplained

<sup>8</sup> Weinert was also keen to augment his own anthropological collection through new acquisitions.

to this day. Together with the RV-collection, which was packed in crates of the same type and stored away, the crates of the S-collection were found in the cellar of the *Marstallgebäude des Berliner Stadtschlosses* (stables building of the Berlin City Palace) in 1948. The route which both collections took to end up in this location is unknown.

Until the day they were found together in the *Marstall* building, the history of the RV-collection is a separate one. As the property of the BGAEU, it remained in its premises at the MfV even when the S-collection was administered by the university from 1925 and by the KWI-A from 1928. But it is best to start from the very beginning: Rudolf Virchow's intensive collecting activities with regard to anthropological objects began around 1869, the year in which the BGAEU was founded. Long before that, however, he had been collecting pathological specimens and, occasionally, skulls and skeletons. Thanks to the possibilities offered by the BGAEU and its newly founded organ '*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*' (ZfE; Journal of Ethnology), Virchow was offered a platform on which he could scientifically discuss and present his numerous new anthropological acquisitions. He was a hard-working and very active collector with access to an enormous network of acquaintances, colleagues, and admirers. However, unlike von Luschan, he could not rely on acquisitions through state ventures, but the RV-collection nevertheless grew to over 4000 skulls, mainly acquired through donations and purchases.<sup>9</sup> In 1881, on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, friends and sponsors set up a foundation which enabled the recipient to dispose freely of its funds. Virchow was thus able to acquire collection items or to obtain anthropological material by co-financing excavations. Since the MfV was also created (in 1886) at the instigation of the BGAEU, parts of the BGAEU's collection were housed in the museum from 1888 onwards. Thus, the S-collection and parts of the RV-collection were at least stored in the same building between 1886 and 1925.<sup>10</sup> With the death of Rudolf Virchow on 05 September 1902, the acquisition activities for the RV-collection largely ended, and it became the sole property of the BGAEU in 1905. The maintenance of Virchow's collection items, which were still stored in the old Pathological Institute of the Charité, was seamlessly transferred to BGAEU member Carl Strauch (1868–1931), who found a large number of skulls and also 'Præhistorica' which had not yet been inventoried. As early as 1902, there were efforts to unite the collections of Virchow, which already belonged to the BGAEU and was kept at the MfV, and those which were still at the university, within the Ethnological Museum (Virchow 1902: 485). It took until 1906, however, to complete the transfer, the same year that Carl Strauch had to give up his position. He created the so-called '*Strauch-Nummern-Verzeichnis*' (Strauch's numbered index) (BGAEU-NSRV 42), which is the basis of all later inventories. In 1906, von

9 The highest inventory number is RV 4099. Of this number, some 3500 are preserved today. The RV-collection contains only 3 zoological objects.

10 Part of Virchow's anthropological collection was stored at the old pathological institute of the university (BGAEU-ADE 112).

Luschan succeeded Strauch as collection commissioner of the BGAEU and began with the numerical marking of the skulls. Until von Luschan's death, various anthropologists, some of them well-known, such as Otto Schlaginhaufen (1879–1973), Jan Czekanowski (1882–1965), or Beatrice Bickel (?–1948), were involved with the numbering and structuring of the RV-collection. After 1924, it was without a dedicated curator, and it remained with the MfV at least until 1943. The removal and relocation of the RV-collection must have taken place at about the same time as that of the S-collection, was probably carried out by the same company (see the identical crates), and it was possibly moved to the same location in northern Brandenburg. Based on the existing sources, however, this must remain speculation. Reliable evidence only becomes available again from the point when both collections were found in the *Marshall* building in 1948. From 1949 onwards, the S- and RV-collections remained administratively linked, and they were henceforth referred to (in the GDR) simply as the *Virchowsammlung* (RVS; Virchow Collection). In 1949, the skulls first went to the Institute of Psychology at the Humboldt University, where they were looked after by Hans Grimm (1910–1995), a physician who was actually based in Halle/Saale (BGAEU-NG-741: 19). The founding in 1955 of an Anthropological Institute at the Humboldt University under his direction opened up the possibility of conserving the collection for the first time since the war, using the institute's own funds. This included the establishment of suitable rooms at Charlottenstraße 19 (near Checkpoint Charlie), where part of the collections could be stored. The BGAEU, which was re-founded in 1951 after losing all its financial assets and premises during the war, explicitly supported a planned merger under Hans Grimm. A new chapter was opened in 1964 with the employment of Ingrid Wustmann (1939–2007), who was responsible for the registration and restoration of the inventory under the direction of Hans Grimm until she left in 1976 for professional reasons. Despite further changes of location, she and her successor, the biologist Dr. Ulrich Creutz, had succeeded in creating inventory lists and fundamentally restoring the collections by 1982. After Hans Grimm retired in 1975, Dr. Lothar Schott (1930–1996) assumed responsibility for the collections. In 1980, the collections were again relocated and reassigned, this time in their entirety, to the *Naturkundemuseum* (Natural History Museum) in the Invalidenstraße. However, the collections found no rest here, as the framework conditions were constantly changing. In 1986, the anthropology was separated from the museum association to become part of the Charité as a separate institute. The 1990 reunification also brought about major upheavals. The personal insecurity of the staff members about their individual future was compounded by institutional insecurity for the collections. After 1990, the BGAEU, based in West Berlin and owner of the RV-collection, and the Institute for Human Biology at the *Freie Universität* (Free University) under Prof. Carsten Niemitz joined in as 'players'. In addition to old furniture, post-cranial skeletal remains belonging to the collections and the previously mentioned 309 index cards of the S-collection were stored in the building of the latter. All of this was transferred to the Charité in 1994. In 1996, the anthropological collections moved into

their last residence at the Charité, a bunker at Ziegelstraße 12 in central Berlin. Urgent comments by Creutz about the insufficient space and the poor climatic conditions were tempered by the response that this was only a temporary solution and that the decisive factor was to maximise the use of space rather than to make it more practical. In 2004, the collection was moved – along with Creutz as its responsible custodian – within the Charité to the department of the *Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum* (BMM; Berlin Museum of Medical History). In 2006, Ulrich Creutz retired, and the responsibility at the BMM passed to curator Dr. Beate Kunst. The last major change (and the associated relocation) took place in 2010 and 2011: first the RV-, then the S- and RS-collections were transferred from the BMM – i.e.; the Charité – to the *Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (MVF; Museum of Pre- and Early History) of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (SMB – SPK; National Museums in Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation). However, the RV-collection is still the property of the BGAEU, while the RS- and S-collections became the property of the *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*. With the relocation to an external depot owned by the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* in Berlin-Friedrichshagen, the collection was extensively cleaned, reassembled, and inventoried. The time-consuming and thorough collection-related activities were mainly the responsibility and management of the then Deputy Director of the MVF, Dr. Alix Hänsel, and the Head of the Archive, Horst Junker. The BGAEU made a considerable financial contribution to the relocation and reorganisation. Thus, after many decades and numerous moves, the collections are now in appropriate facilities which allow further processing and ensure their preservation.

In the past decade, research on anthropological material from an anthropological point of view has been limited to archaeological remains. Skulls like those in the present study, which have a colonial or potentially colonial acquisition background, were – and still are – not accessible for public research. The anthropological investigations within the framework of provenance research serve the restricted purpose of source-critical access and comparison with archival sources.

In summary, it can be said that the S- and RV-collections in particular were a genuine product of their respective collectors, i.e., von Luschan and Virchow. With their respective deaths, both collections lost their scientific relevance to such an extent that no actual successor could be found to continue their research during the following decades. The collections nearly fell into oblivion, or seem at least to have been perceived as a burden. Nevertheless, a renewed interest in the skulls has flared up over the last few years. On the one hand, this was caused by technological developments and new scientific possibilities, for example, of DNA analyses, and on the other hand, by claims for restitution of the communities from which some of the skulls located in Berlin had been taken more than a hundred years ago. With the latter development, the collections now run the risk of being at least partially dissolved, and being themselves turned into history as former evidence of history. Whether this is to be deplored is open to question, and certainly up to everyone to judge for themselves. The

extent of the scientific work, and thus its ‘value’ with regard to the respective collections, varied greatly. In the case of the S-collection, it must be noted that the research certainly did not reach the scope von Luschan had hoped for. It seems rather ironic that he hardly ever got around to do actual research because of all his collecting. With Rudolf Virchow, things certainly look different. His acquisitions were discussed frequently and on a regular basis at the meetings of the BGAEU, and then published in the *ZfE*. True, this would sometimes also happen with skulls from the S-collection, but never to a comparable extent. It is also important to note in this context that the RV-collection largely consists of Human Remains with an archaeological origin. This is only partially the case with the S-collection.

The history of the collection as described above has not yet reached its end. We are currently only adding another chapter. The research sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Foundation will result in restitutions to the countries of origin. In 2011 and 2012, the Human Remains Project was based at the BMM and received the support of the German Research Foundation. Here, too, the focus of research was on the acquisition background of colonial remains, with the ultimate outcome being restitutions to Namibia and other countries (Stoecker et al. 2013).

### A brief review of Human Remains from East Africa in the context of the collection’s history

The Human Remains which were the subject of the present investigations belong to different parts of the collection. This is obviously due to the different acquisition backgrounds and times. Clearly, however, the largest portion is held in the S-collection, and it consists mainly of acquisitions made in Rwanda. The following table provides detailed figures of all Human Remains including those that are missing or loaned out, separated according to the modern countries of origin.

Table 1: ‘Probably S-collection’ means that these remains have not had an inventory number since the Second World War due to damage, but originally seem to have belonged to the Luschan collection. With the takeover by the SPK, these items received the prefix ‘O-Cha’ (*Osteologie Charité*); ‘Geographically Unassignable’ means that these remains can not be assigned to one specific country

	S-collection	RV-collection	Probably S-collection (O-Cha)	RS-collection
Rwanda	903	1	17	-
Tanzania	192	65	17	12
Kenya	25	10	2	-
Geographically Unassignable	4	2	8	-



This information will be discussed and presented in more detail in the following chapters, including the sequence of acquisitions and their circumstances. However, even a cursory look at Rwanda illustrates that there may have been a number of such events for each country: The first skulls probably came to Berlin through Richard Kandt around 1899, and in 1900, more skulls from the collector Langheld were added to the collection. However, the year of their actual acquisition is unknown. The last entries were made by Jan Czekanowski (particularly for 1907). After that, no more entries are recorded for Rwanda. This also means (and this may equally apply to Tanzania and Kenya) that the collecting activities are concentrated in a rather narrow window of time around 1900, i.e., the later years of the colonial period are of secondary relevance. With the beginning of the First World War, collecting activities came to a complete standstill anyway, at least with regard to the former German overseas territories.

In the course of our project, the question naturally arose as to what actually happened to the collection inventory from East Africa between the acquisition around 1900 and the beginning of the reappraisal more than a hundred years later. However, due to the meager documentation available, it can only be stated that, in general, the Human Remains from East Africa, like all the other Human Remains, have undergone the usual rearrangements, destruction, divisions, and mergers to the same extent. At no time were they the subject of special treatment or the focus of a separate scientific study. Therefore, it is difficult to discern where the East African remains were stored at a particular time, or what happened to them specifically during the Second World War and the immediate aftermath. In fact, the Charité project (see above), which was ultimately forced to concentrate on the remains from Namibia, initially studied these remains, too (at least in part). Even during the reorganisation of the collections of the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, the portion of the collection which originated from East Africa was not, at first, the subject of special consideration.<sup>11</sup> From 2014, when the bulk of the work concerning the sighting, restoration, and reorganisation of the collections was completed, the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz* began to deal specifically with the processing of all the colonial remains. Here, too, East Africa was not as yet the sole focus. This changed when ARD television's political magazine FAKT aired a report dealing with the Human Remains from Rwanda in late 2016. As a consequence, H.E. Igor Cesar, the Rwandan ambassador to Berlin, first learned about the Rwandan Human Remains in the depots of the *Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz*. Both sides then contacted one another, and the SPK provided information on the state of affairs as known at the time. In the months following, the ambassadors of Tanzania and Kenya were also informed as soon as reliable information was available. The momentum created by this exchange finally

<sup>11</sup> A series of 32 skulls from Tanzania remains in the care of the Charité today to allow the respective acquisition circumstances to be clarified. The results on these remains are scheduled to be published soon.

culminated in the two-and-a-half-year funding provided by the Gerda Henkel Foundation (from 2017 to 2020), without whose generous support the research and the present publication would not have been possible.

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