

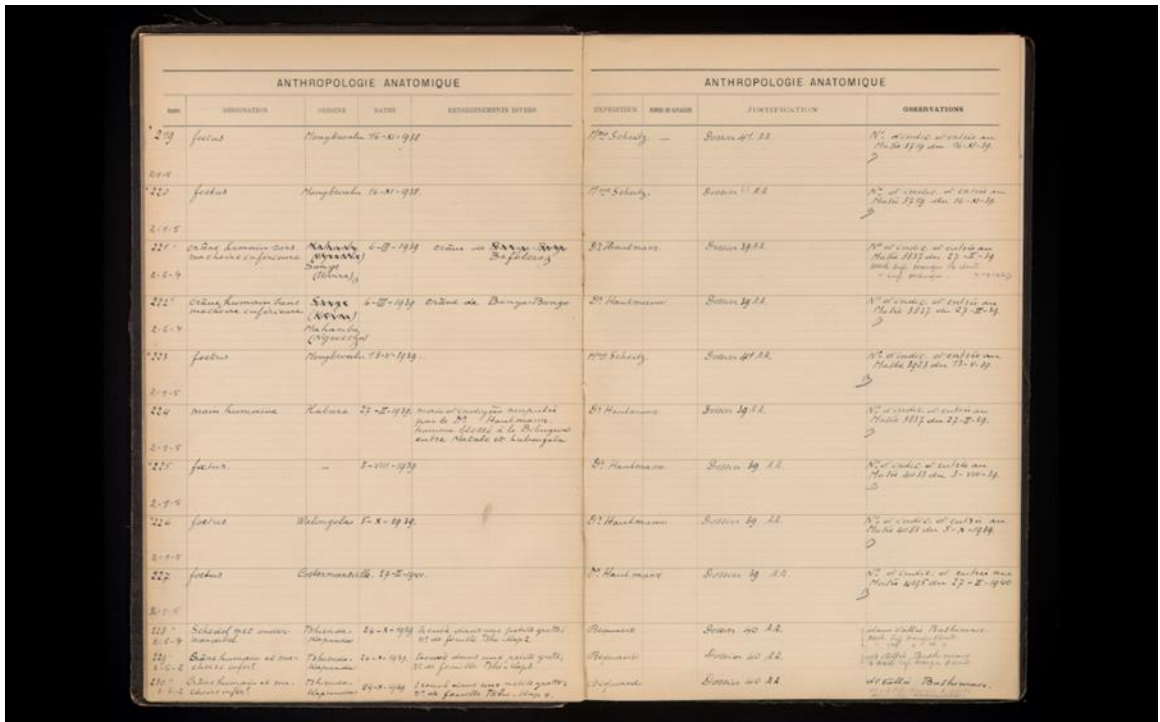
HOME

Human Remains Origin(s) Multidisciplinary Evaluation

DURATION
15/12/2019 – 14/03/2022

BUDGET
880 940 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Belgian Federal Scientific Institutions (FSIs), Universities and private entities house human remains from many different geographical origins, periods and contexts. Some of these human remains were discovered in archaeological excavations. Others were from the Belgian administration, members of scientific societies, and museums which created osteological collections with the aim of documenting humans from various geographical and ethnic origins. Some of these remains were appropriated in the colonial era in very problematic circumstances. There is currently no complete inventory available of these collections and their associated documentation. There is also no policy or best practice on how to manage human remains collections, and what to do in the event of repatriation requests or even how to consider the status of these remains.



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The objectives of the HOME project are to evaluate from the collections and associated archives the historical, scientific, legal and ethical background of the human remains hosted by the Belgian FSIs, as well as in other public, academic and private collections in Belgium. This will include studying all relevant documentation associated with these remains to examine how they were acquired and if there have been any previous repatriation requests.

The multidisciplinary expertise will cover the following disciplines:

- Physical or bio-anthropologists will produce inventories of the human remains collections and the associated archives housed by FSIs and other major academic and private organisations in Belgium. They will also evaluate the relevance of such collections for present day research questions in bio-anthropology.
- Historians will focus on provenance research, on how human remains were acquired, by whom, when and in what circumstances.
- Social anthropologists will develop a network and ensure communication with specialists and different ethnographical communities in the countries of origin: what is the opinion in these countries on repatriation of human remains and on the issue of family and community members?
- Geneticists will investigate the possibilities and limits of the identification of individual's remains with their families using genetic methods.
- Law specialists will analyse the legal aspects linked to the project, such as the present status of human remains in public and private collections, the legal background of colonisation, in Belgium and abroad, and the protection of personal data in case of repatriation requests. They will also provide an overview of the existing legal framework in Belgium, detect the main gaps and offer suggestions for enabling/facilitating the repatriation of human remains.
- Computer scientists will look at the possibilities of virtual repatriation and the sharing of digital data (3D models and documentation).

The HOME project will also look at specific case studies. This will be done in dialogue with all stakeholders, including family members and experts from the countries of origin, but also working with different institutions and governmental organisations.

The results of the HOME project will achieve a multidisciplinary evaluation of the Human remains collections in Belgium, particularly in the FSIs. The deliverables of the project will include inventories of the collections and associated documents in the different institutions. The reports will also detail how to best manage the diverse human remains collections in Belgium and propose different management scenarios to face existing and possible future requests of repatriation.

At the end of the project, a public conference is scheduled to be held on the historical collections of human remains and the question of repatriation, presenting results from the project in support of the debate of political and societal stakeholders, and in order to orient future policy in an informed way in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS

<http://collections.naturalsciences.be/ssh-anthropology/home>