Perspectives on the Handling and Storage of Human Remains in Tanzania: A Due diligence to Restitution Plan

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Abstract

The notion of "life after death" encompasses an infinite belief system across the universe. In most African cultures, death is not the end of life; rather, the reality of human personality exists throughout a person's lifetime and continues after death. Many people believe that the deceased maintain a spiritual connection through blessings and curses among the living. This article focuses on perspectives regarding the handling and storage of human remains in Tanzania, a nation with more than 120 ethnic groups, each with different cultures and religions. Moreover, it examines ritual practices and traditional guidelines established to honor the dead, misconceptions, and unsubstantiated beliefs related to the handling of human remains. It also explores the legal framework of the country, institutional guidelines, and articulated codes of ethics from the relevant societies in Tanzania. Ultimately, the article highlights the relationships among existing perspectives and the potential for implementing the restitution of human remains taken during the colonial era, as well as the challenges that may arise and the mitigation measures that can be adopted.

Keywords: Life After Death, Human Remains, Restitution, Existing Perspectives, Legal Framework

Introduction

During the Berlin Conference of 1884, Africa was divided and ruled by European capitalists (Wright, 1969). From then on, the existing borders of many countries in Africa were created (League of Nations, 1925). The region that later became Tanganyika, Burundi, and Rwanda formed the German East Africa colony (Wright, 1969; Jilala, 2022). Before the advent of colonialism, Africans ruled themselves through kings in organized kingdoms, who were appointed or inherited the ruling role according to their tribe's socio-constructed traditions and customs (Gewald, 2015). For instance, we had "Sukumaland," "Maasailand," "Chaggaland," "Gogoland," "Nyamweziland," etc. Africans were not ready to be colonized; in response, they fought many wars against colonialism (Brockmeyer, Edward, and Stoecker, 2020). In Tanganyika, an estimated four hundred thousand (400,000) people died fighting against German colonialism (Gewald, 2015; Gabriel, 2015; Brockmeyer, Edward, and Stoecker, 2020). Some of the cranial and post-cranial human remains of defeated African individuals were taken to Germany's physical anthropology departments, human anatomy units, and museums (Apoh and Mehler, 2020; Brockmeyer, Edward, and Stoecker, 2020). Many of these remains were collected illegally, including grave exhumation and decapitation of those who lost on the battlefield as European nations competed to expand colonies before and after the 1884 Berlin Conference (Jilala et al., 2022; Bräuer, 1980).

During the colonial period, the research agenda in human evolution and anatomy was marked by racial discrimination (Wiredu et al., 1999). Using both gross anatomy and craniometrical techniques, the skulls of Africans were examined to determine if they were similar to those of White individuals, Chinese, Indians, and Arabs (Jilala, Museum, et al., 2022). Many publications based on these colonial human remains were written in a racist manner, subjecting Black Africans to the status of an inferior race and obscuring the truth about the pre-colonial development of Africa. To justify discrimination and the mental and physical slavery of Black people, Africa was referred to as the Dark Continent (Bodziany and Nowakowska, 2020). Africans realize that colonialism killed people and destroyed Africa's economy, traditions, and customs (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). Moreover, colonialists carried the human remains of their loved ones and turned them into research samples with the aim of oppressing them and creating a class of racial superiority and inferiority based on 'scientific racism' that persists to this day (Peña-Saint-Martin and Vera-Cortés, 2018). Scientific racists employed physical anthropology and human anatomy studies as tools for colonialism, using the human skeletal remains of Africans transported abroad during the colonial era to create hatred, discrimination, and incorrect notions about the human race (Terrell, 2017).

It is understandable that the truth of those studies has been revealed in recent days and that research on human skeletal remains has been opposed at every corner (DiGangi and Bethard, 2021; Martrille et al., 2007; Cristina and Melo, 1984). Even the display of human skeletal remains is highly criticized for being against bioethical standards (Alberti et al., 2009). Through these campaigns against the oppressive acts carried out by colonialists, many communities have demanded the return of human remains along with cultural objects to their country of origin.

The matter of restitution and repatriation of human remains has also received support from the international community through organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS (Förster, 2018). Nevertheless, many colonialists holding these human remains are troubled by the understanding of the people's perspectives on handling and storing human remains in the respective countries from which they were taken during the colonial era (Lamptey and Apoh, 2020). It is clear that societal perspectives on the handling and storage of

human remains depend on traditions and customs, religion, laws, and other relevant community guidelines (Jilala et al., 2022). Thus, every society in the world has its own views on handling and storing human remains based on their contextual economic, social, and educational foundations (Lamptey and Apoh, 2020).

In some communities and families, the remains of the deceased are considered to have spiritual power and the ability to nurture, heal, and enliven the descendants of the deceased individual (Brück and Booth, 2022). However, there is also an observation that if handling and storing are not treated with due respect, the relevant spirit may curse, destroy, and cause harm to their people (Niemiec, Russo-Netzer, and Pargament, 2020; Brück and Booth, 2022; Jilala et al., 2021). In some African societies, dead bodies are buried along with food in the belief that in the afterlife, they will continue to live spiritually while eating and drinking (Kamsen and Biwul, 2014). In Thailand, for instance, some communities have been reported to live with the remains of the deceased in their homes due to a belief in the presence of spiritual power in those human remains (Brück and Booth, 2022). Several burial practices in East Africa dictate that deceased elders are buried inside their houses, especially in the bedroom, so that they can continue to act as guardians or relatives of the respective family. All these practices indicate the community's belief in the presence of spiritual powers in human remains. Consequently, respect and dignity for the dead are emphasized, drawing on notions of the existence of spiritual connections between the dead and the living, and moreover, the belief that the individual's spirit prefers to remain in their human remains (Kamsen and Biwul, 2014; Lamptey and Apoh, 2020; Brück and Booth, 2022).

Among Christian in general, and specifically within Catholic Church, human remains are considered sacramental—an external symbol imbued with spiritual power (Kazan, 2020). Those who have performed good deeds attain the status of "saints" based on their holiness; and the remains of their bodies are also kept as holy relics (Van Strydonck et al., 2009). Some churches have special collections of human remains or "crypts" for holy relics (Tomov, 2018; Brück and Booth, 2022). Muslims also take care of the graves of the Prophet's companions, referred to as holy places in the countries of the Middle East (Meri, 2010; Mughal, 2021). Nevertheless, in Islamic faiths, females are not permitted to handle dead bodies, whether by washing or even participating in burying individuals (Meri, 2010).

Groups of scientists studying human anatomy, pathology, medicine, bioarchaeology, and anthropology worldwide preserve human remains with the aim of generating new knowledge about diseases, treatments, and associated abnormal features (Förster, 2018; Antoine and Taylor, 2014). This has led to the need for storage of human remains in medical schools, museums, and the establishment of "body farms" for forensic science training. It is noted that the availability of human remains at such institutions is based on collecting unclaimed bodies, donations, and archaeological field excavation (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2005). In countries that once colonized other nations after the Berlin Conference, human remains collections were created by the decapitation of those defeated on colonial battlefields (Parashar and Schulz, 2021). The exhumation of graves by force was also involved (Bräuer, 1980). Human skeletal remains were the most targeted due to their preservation being easier than that of soft tissues. Thus, institutions involved in human anatomy training, race and morphological variation studies, pathology, and cranial biological profile research found themselves establishing skeletal collections from individuals of various nationalities across continents (Campanacho, Alves Cardoso, and Ubelaker, 2021; Eliopoulos, Lagia, and Manolis, 2007).

Currently, not all communities agree with the use of human remains in such institutions (Aslam, Kumarasinghe, and Lowe, 2021; Campanacho, Alves Cardoso, and Ubelaker, 2021; Anjankar, 2020). In some countries, the use of cadavers in medical schools and the storage and exhibition of human remains in museums has been condemned or completely blocked (Tesfaye et al., 2021; Iwanaga et al., 2021). Several nations have enacted special laws and guidelines for handling and storing human remains according to their moral interpretations. It is evident that perspectives on handling and storing human remains differ from one nation to another (Habicht, Kiessling, and Winkelmann, 2018; Tesfaye et al., 2021). Every community or nation has its perspectives based on the wishes, beliefs, taboos, traditions, and customs of the people involved (Shilabukha and Muyembe, 2024). This article highlights the perspectives on handling human remains among Tanzanians, a nation with more than 120 ethnic groups and diverse religions and cultures surrounding the handling of dead bodies. According to the 2022 population and housing census, Tanzania has a population of 61,741,120, of which 59,851,347 people live on the mainland and 1,889,773 on the islands of Zanzibar (National Bureau of Statistics - Tanzania, 2022). The national language is Swahili, coexisting harmoniously with multiple traditional ethnic cultures and groups that have different perspectives on handling dead bodies, with both Islam and Christianity flourishing alongside African traditional religions.

Methodology

The data for this research were collected through multiple methods including case studies, interviews and literature review. In-depth case studies were conducted among different ethnic groups, including the Chagga, Gogo, Hehe, and general perspectives from various Tanzanian communities. Each case study provided a unique lens through which cultural practices related to human remains were analyzed. Observations from specific events, such as ritual ceremonies and exhumations, were documented to elucidate community beliefs and practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including local leaders, cultural practitioners, and anthropologists who specialize in the study of human remains and cultural practices in Tanzania. Interview questions focused on individual experiences, beliefs related to the deceased, and thoughts on restitution efforts for human remains taken during the colonial era. A comprehensive literature review was performed to contextualize the findings within existing academic discourse on human remains, cultural practices, and the historical context of colonialism in Tanzania. Previous studies, anthropological texts, and relevant legal frameworks were examined to enrich the analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes within the perspectives of different communities. Thematic coding allowed the researcher to categorize the data into significant themes related to cultural beliefs about the sanctity of human remains, ritual practices associated with handling and storage, perspectives on the impacts of colonialism regarding the treatment of human remains, Legal and ethical considerations surrounding restitution and repatriation efforts. Through this analysis, insights were drawn regarding the complexity of societal attitudes toward human remains as influenced by cultural, religious, and historical factors.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented in a narrative format that integrates case studies alongside thematic discussions. Each section illustrates the various perspectives on the handling and storage of human remains, supported by illustrative examples from the interviews and observations from the case studies. Furthermore, the study employs comparative analysis among the different ethnic groups found in Tanzania to highlight both shared beliefs and distinct practices regarding human remains. By synthesizing these perspectives, the article underscores the importance of honoring cultural beliefs while navigating the ethical landscape surrounding the restitution of human remains.

Case Studies

The Human Remains Ritual Ceremony in the Chagga Tribe

In November 2019, in the Rombo-Kilimanjaro region, a family exhumed a loved one who died in 2013 for a human remains ritual ceremony. It is believed that human remains provide great blessings and favors to descendants. Additionally, if the unearthing ritual is not performed, it can cause diseases, poverty, misfortunes, and death for the concerned family. Therefore, the exhumation ritual ceremony was crucial for their prosperity. The ritual had special procedures to follow, and if not done accurately, it was believed to have serious effects on the descendants. The family members prepared the items required for the ritual and invited a traditional ritual master, along with other anointed ritual practitioners, to assist them in handling the human remains during the ritual.

One day before the exhumation exercise, in the afternoon, the traditional ritual master planted an Isale plant, “Dracaena fragans” (mbuoni), somewhere north of where the family was implementing the human remains ritual ceremony and poured ‘mbege’ (local beer) on the expected grave to be exhumed. The next morning, the traditional ritual master and other clan members (anointed ritual practitioners) went to check if the leaf had withered or not. They found that it had not withered, which signified that the exhumation ceremony had great blessings. Then, a goat was slaughtered, and words were spoken while the ritual master shed the blood in the grave. If the Isale leaf had withered, then the ritual would be suspended until the next day, and a special prayer would be made to ask the deceased for consent regarding the exhumation.

When the day arrived, the clansmen and anointed ritual practitioners dug up the grave while the old ritual master instructed them on what to do. The excavation activity was carried out by male individuals, while the females continued with the hustle and bustle of cooking for the big celebration. Once they exposed the skeletal remains of the deceased, they stopped everything, and the females were allowed to approach the grave area, throw some seeds, and then provide food for their relatives to eat in the context of the deceased individual. After eating and drinking, the human remains were placed on Isale leaves and then stored inside a special room that had already been prepared by the family for handling human remains and ritual purposes. Once the skeletal remains were kept inside the room, it signified that the person was alive and no longer dead.

The next day, early in the morning, they took the skull, smeared it with "ghee" oil, and then performed other rituals on it. The traditional ritual master held the skull, while family members took turns anointing it with oil, each praying for their individual needs. Later, the traditional ritual master carried the skull and placed it at “mbuoni,” a small bush or wild area where the Isale plant grew, north of the respective family. While

going to Mbuoni, they were not allowed to look back, make noise, or act contrary to morals until the ritual was completed. This tradition has been practiced by ancestors since then and has been passed down from one generation to another

Figure 1: One of the storage areas of huaman remains after exhumation (Kiungu) planted with Isale floras (Dracaena fragrans) in Ibukoni Village, Rombo, in Kilimanjaro region

The Human Remains Uttered Codes of Ethics from the Gogo Tribe

In August 2018, 34 graves were exhumed from the main campus of the University of Dodoma and relocated to the Ngh'ongh'ona village. The Gogo people believe that the dead should not be offended because, through their remains, they possess talismanic spiritual power to bless or curse the living, granting them fertility or barrenness, rain or drought, and sickness or healing. Therefore, the exercise of moving the graves and their remains was not an easy task; it had to be approached with great caution. Among the exhumed bodies were the remains of Chief Ngh'wangh'wala, the forerunner of Jibweni village. A formal assurance of certain safety for the descendants was provided by the head of the clan before the disinterment of Chief Ngh'wangh'wala's remains to avoid retribution inflicted by the spirit of moral outrage. The exhumers were cautioned to avoid noises, ingestions, and unmonitored movements during the process of exhumation, lifting, packing, wrapping, transporting, and re-interring the remains of Chief Ngh'wangh'wala. Before the interment, the clan leader made an apology to the deceased for the disturbance, while also acknowledging the significance of the chief's remains in the casket.

A

B

C

D

Figure 2: (A). Photo shows an area of eighty meters surrounded by cordoning tape to protect the area being exhumed; (B): The crowd of people who came to witness the exhumation and re-interment of the Chief'. Ngh'wangh'wala and others; (C): The remains of the Chief. ngh'wangh'wala after being exposed covered with sheets inside the grave; (D): The re-interment of the bodies of the dead in the Ngh'ongh'ona area after it has been moved from the Dodoma University area where it was previously buried

The Human Remains and Superstitious Beliefs in the Hehe Tribe

In May 2017, at Utengule Village in Mafinga District, unknown individuals excavated the grave of an individual at night in search of human remains for reasons related to superstitious beliefs. However, they failed to find the remains and left the grave open. Consequently, the incident was reported to the Utengule Police Station, and a forensic anthropologist was sent to investigate the grave, which had been left open for more than three days.

Rumors spread that the tomb had great illusory powers to defeat witches, and it reportedly failed to attract anyone willing to cover it, as everyone who attempted to do so experienced headaches. An investigation conducted by the forensic anthropology expert revealed that the tomb contained a chamber that the criminals could not access. This chamber housed the coffin with the remains of the deceased. After the expert completed the investigation and reburied the grave without any issues, another false rumor

circulated, stating that "the forensic anthropologist was one of the indomitable sorcerers employed by the government in witchcraft matters." This was due to the Hehe belief that possessing or handling skeletal human remains is associated with witchcraft, making it morally unacceptable. Human remains are regarded as terrifying, and they are believed to bring misfortunes, curses, and diseases.

A

B

C

D

Figure 3: (A) A group of people gathered in the Utengule Village Cemetery before the start of the forensic anthropology investigation exercise. (B) The people gathered to witness the investigation doing a special prayer during the investigation. (C) The investigator having reached the human remains in the chamber where they were buried. (D); the dead body remains in the coffin after being exposed

The Human Remains Moral Outrage in Most Tanzanians

In 2007, the National Museum of Tanzania organized an exhibition on human evolution to be held at the Sabasaba International Trade Fair, which involved displays of various hominins along with real human remains of anatomically modern humans. The goal was to show the actual anatomical and morphological variations that exist throughout the fossil evidence of human evolution. When people found out that the exhibition included real human remains assembled and displayed vertically in the anatomical position, they

were afraid to approach the exhibition, prompting the organizers to remove those remains. A similar display was also removed from the Human Evolution Hall at the Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam. The audience associated the human remains exhibition with witchcraft and satanic practices, creating fear and sorrow among them. Currently, the skull of Chief Mkwawa displayed in the Kalenga Museum is the only human remains on display in the country. Undoubtedly, challenges similar to those that arose in the two exhibitions in Dar es Salaam have been reported. This illustrates the moral outrage, violence, disgrace, and indignation surrounding the handling and storage of human remains, as perceived by most people across various tribes in Tanzania.

Figure 4: A complete set of individual human skeletal remains assembled or articulated for teaching and exhibition in 2007 on Sabasaba International Trade Fair-Dar es salaam

Figure 5: The believed Mkwawa's skull housed in Kalenga Museum, Iringa.

Jilala (2021) reports that people involved in the handling of human remains in museums, mortuaries, autopsies, forensic exhumation, and the identification of skeletonized human remains are rumored to be linked to witchcraft or to possess superstitious powers. Sometimes, the work of individuals in mortuaries is assumed to be cursed, causing them to live with temporary psychological trauma or permanent mental problems as well. This is attributed to the belief that people who regularly handle dead bodies experience repetitive transient psychological effects from each body they attend to, unlike other individuals. This leads society to conclude that mortuary attendants and morticians are either cursed by the dead bodies or are practitioners of witchcraft using superstitious powers that induce mental problems.

In general, handling and storing dead bodies in Tanzania's institutions are perceived not only as a dangerous profession but also as one associated with moral outrage and witchcraft, belonging to deranged individuals. This perception arises because most of society views the handling of human remains as both difficult and frightening. Jilala reports that in many cases involving the handling of dead bodies for forensic exhumation, dissection, and funeral matters, individuals complain of experiencing temporary stress, imaginative fears, sleep disturbances, and sometimes nightmares.

Legal Framework in Handling Human Remains

It is a criminal offense for an individual to be found in possession of human organs or human remains (see Figure 6) or to delay burial according to the Penal Code, section 128 of Tanzania. Individuals found with human remains illegally are arrested and prosecuted for the crime. However, an individual can relocate or move graves according to the Grave Removal Act of 1969, wherein any land on which a grave is situated is required for public purposes. In addition, grave removal or relocation can be performed due to traditional ritual practices or religious reasons, but it is not permitted to keep or start a human skeletal collection at home. The general conditions for grave removal and the handling of human remains during the course are as follows:

1. As far as possible, with due regard to the views of the parties interested and the religious susceptibilities of the members of the religious community to which the deceased belonged;
2. With due solemnity and respectful treatment of the dead.
3. So far as practicable, without unnecessary damage to the grave and the dead body;
4. In such a manner that a dead body that is disinterred is transported and re-interred without undue delay.
5. Under conditions of privacy that ensure no dead body is exposed to public view;
6. In a manner that is not injurious to public health and in accordance with the directions given by a public officer appointed by the Minister to supervise the undertaking.

Tanzania's medical school institutions are allowed to possess human remains in the College or Departments of Human Anatomy for teaching and generating knowledge in the medical field through research. The handling and storage of both human cadavers and skeletonized human remains are directed by "the Anatomy Rules," established in 1963, and bioethics conditions set by the relevant institutions. According to the respective "Anatomy Rules," if a registered medical officer has caused human remains to be sent to the medical school, the body will be preserved, but nothing more will be done for a period of not less than fourteen days. If, after a period of fourteen days, no one has claimed the human remains of a deceased individual, any professor, teacher, or lecturer of anatomy, medicine, pathology, or surgery, or medical student under the supervision of any such professor or teacher can dissect the body for training and research purposes. Under these anatomy rules, the medical school may authorize the retention of any body part, including disarticulated human skeletal remains. This is how Tanzania's medical schools create human skeletal collections for teaching and generating medical knowledge.

Regardless of the circumstances, according to the laws of the country, only medical school institutions, the Chief Government Chemist, the National Museum of Tanzania, and the Forensic Bureau of the Tanzania Police Force are legally entitled to store human remains. According to the Government Chemist Laboratory Authority Act No. 8 of 2016, the Human DNA Regulation Act of 2009 (Act No. 8 of 2009), the Tanzania Criminal Procedure Act CAP. 20 (RE 2002), the Tanzania Police Force and Auxiliary Service Act CAP. 322 (RE: 2002), and the Tanzania Evidence Act CAP. 6 (RE 2002), the Chief Government Chemist Laboratory Agency and the Forensic Bureau of the Tanzania Police Force are limited to handling human remains related to criminal cases only during a forensic investigation. Immediately after the criminal investigation, the remains are buried following the procedures established by the Tanzania Police Force. Therefore, the handling and storage of human remains in these two institutions is solely for criminal cases and for the purpose of helping the courts to serve justice.

In accordance with the Antiquities Act, Cap. 333, and the National Museum of Tanzania Act, Cap. 281, the National Museum of Tanzania has the mandate to handle and store anthropological or archaeological human remains for the preservation of national heritage, history, relics, and research purposes.

Some of the archaeological human remains collections in the National Museum of Tanzania include those collected in 1967 by Professor Jiro Ikeda of Kyoto University, comprising a total of 11 individuals. Another collection from Kisese II was sent to the Nairobi Museum of Kenya and has not been returned. Additionally, there are human remains collected from Mrambalasi in the Iringa region by Prof. Pamela Willoughby, collaborating with Dr. Paul Msemwa of the National Museum of Tanzania, along with Dr. Pastory Bushozi of the University of Dar es Salaam in 2003 and 2006. There are also remains from Kilwa collected by archaeological researchers with funding from the British Institute of Eastern Africa (BIEA) in the 1990s, along with others recently collected by Dr. Bushozi with bioarchaeology field school students from the University of Dar es Salaam in 2019.

Figure 6: The Inspector General of the Police (IGP) listening to an expert from the Forensic Bureau of the Tanzania Police Force during the investigation of human remains that were alleged possessed illegally from Kibiti, Coast region. These two human skulls of male individuals tied with red charms were believed to be used in witchcraft and superstition matters.

The Relevant Talismanic Perspectives in Relation to Restitution

In general, perspectives on the handling and storage of human remains in Tanzania are issues that depend on the traditions and customs of particular tribes (Kamsen and Biwul, 2014). In the Chagga, Meru, and Pare tribes from the Kilimanjaro region, there has been a long tradition of exhuming human remains because of customary ceremonial ritual practices. Accordingly, the culture of handling and storing human remains in the region is already established among them. That is why the traditional and family leaders from these tribes have led the movement and campaign to demand the return of the human remains that were taken from the country under German rule. For 40 years, the skull of Mangi Meli, who was then the Chief of the Chagga, has been sought in Germany. His family, led by Mr. Mboro, has been submitting several requests to the governments of Germany and Tanzania for the return of Mangi Meli's skull (Mnyaka Mboro, 2019). Recently, the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) informed that it has received a repatriation request from several Tanzanians requesting the return of the human remains of their relatives from the Chagga tribe. Another request has been submitted to AMNH by an individual from the Meru tribe,

requesting the return of Chief Kaaya Leboru's skeletal remains. The information provided by AMNH indicates that there are remains of approximately 70 individuals taken from Tanganyika during German colonial rule and sent to America from Germany.

Although many human remains were also taken during the war of Chief Mkwawa, who led the Hehe tribe to resist German colonialism, along with Songea Mbano, who was at the forefront of the Majimaji War, the movement to claim remains from the tribes in the Iringa and Songea Regions has not been as significant compared to claims from the Kilimanjaro region. It is evident that the talismanic perspectives of the Hehe from Iringa and Ngoni from Songea regions on the handling and storage of human remains are very similar to those of the Gogo and Nyiramba tribes in central Tanzania (Dodoma and Singida regions). Even in the western regions (Tabora, Shinyanga, Mwanza, Kigoma, and Kagera) of Tanzania, for the Nyamwezi, Sukuma, Ha, and Haya tribes, the issue of handling human remains is highly feared because it is linked to spiritual issues as well as superstition. This means that in many ethnic groups from the western regions of Tanzania, the agenda of returning human remains has not been a significant issue and is not discussed much. Furthermore, in some tribes, such as the Maasai, human remains are feared, and some families do not even bury their loved ones when they die. They abandon the corpses in the forest, fearing being haunted by death. Therefore, finding human remains in forests and villages where the Maasai have been living nomadically while looking for fodder for their livestock is a common issue. In fact, some human remains included in the restitution plan from German institutions have not been claimed by relatives in Tanzania and may perhaps never be claimed at all. However, the restitution process must consider the rights of the few relatives who come forward to claim the return of their loved ones' human remains. It is their right that should not be ignored or neglected.

Recommended Guidelines for Handling Human Remains

These guidelines can ensure that the handling and reburial of these remains are carried out with dignity and respect. Furthermore, the return of human remains can be an important step towards reconciliation and healing for affected communities. The introduction of this proper guideline can facilitate the restitution process by ensuring that the handling and reburial of the remains are carried out in a way that promotes healing and reconciliation. The guidelines can ensure that local communities are involved in the decision-making process around the handling and reburial of human remains, which is essential for building trust and promoting community engagement. Generally, these guidelines aim to ensure that the return of human remains to Tanzania is carried out with a thoughtful and respectful approach that considers people’s culture, human rights, scientific integrity, community involvement, and dignity.

Initial Handling

1. Upon arrival, human remains should be taken to the National Museum of Tanzania (NMT) for initial examination, documentation, and storage.\
2. The NMT should conduct a preliminary identification process to determine if the remains can be attributed to a specific individual or group.
3. The NMT should create a detailed record of the remains, including photographs, anthropological analysis, and any relevant historical information.

Identification and Notification

1. If the remains are positively identified, the NMT should notify the relevant family or community members, respecting their cultural and traditional practices.
2. The NMT should provide necessary documentation and information to facilitate the return of the remains to the identified family or community.

Unidentified-Remains

If the remains are not positively identified, the Government of Tanzania should decide on their disposition.
The Government may choose to:

a) Bury the remains in a designated area with respect and dignity.
b) Conduct further research to try to identify the remains through DNA analysis or other means.
c) Consider reburial in a sacred or ancestral site, with permission from local authorities and communities

Burial and Memorialization

1. If a burial is chosen, the Government should ensure that it is done with respect and dignity, adhering to local customs and traditions.
2. A memorial or marker should be erected at the burial site, acknowledging the individuals buried there and their history.

Community Engagement and Involvement

1. The Government, through the NMT, should engage with local communities and involve them in the decision-making process regarding the handling of human remains.
2. The NMT should work closely with community leaders, historians, and cultural experts to ensure that traditional practices and cultural sensitivities are respected.

Research and Education

1. The NMT should conduct ongoing research on the restitution of human remains, focusing on their history, cultural significance, and implications for local communities.
2. Educational programs should be developed to raise awareness about the colonial past, its impact on local communities, and the importance of preserving cultural heritage.

These guidelines provide a framework for the respectful handling of human remains from German colonial contexts in Tanzania, prioritizing dignity, respect, and cultural sensitivity. The URT-Restitution Technical Committee should consider following these guidelines in their work towards restitution, healing, and reconciliation for all parties involved.

Potential Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Despite the fact that differing perspectives on the handling and storage of human remains from historical accounts of colonial rule may pose challenges in the restitution process in Tanzania, there are other predictable potential challenges that may arise, as follows:

Lack of Legal and Policy Guidance

In many African countries, particularly Tanzania, the issue of restitution lacks legal and policy guidance. This indicates that restitution was not included in the development agenda. It is likely that the issue was forgotten, not anticipated, or omitted from the legal and political system agenda. Therefore, restitution is not mentioned or explained in detail, or even briefly. It is understandable that for several years in the past, restitution was not the main agenda but has emerged as a cross-cutting issue. Hence, the lack of laws and policies on restitution will lead to challenges in the repatriation and restitution of human remains due to the absence of guidelines throughout the process, particularly in Tanzania.

To solve this challenge, the government should recognize the importance of creating a national committee to prepare a work plan for restitution, which may later coincide with the preparation of policies and guidelines to be involved. Additionally, it is essential for relevant institutions, such as the Departments of Antiquity and the National Museums of Tanzania, to prepare their own guidelines for restitution based on the vision and mission they uphold. This will help avoid role overlap. The Antiquity Division should prepare guiding policy principles while the National Museum of Tanzania should develop operational guidelines regarding restitution.

Failure to Establish Individuals' Identity

Many human remains are identified only by their tribal names, while some of these tribes exist in two different countries or regions. For example, "Maasai" without specifying whether it is the Maasai from Tanzania or Kenya; "Makonde" without clarifying whether it is Makonde from Mozambique or Tanzania. It will not be easy to determine the country of origin of human remains and associated items with regional identity, such as "spear from German East Africa" or "human skull from East Africa."

The use of stable isotope analysis has provided novel approaches for provenance identification of unidentified human remains from forensic contexts, wars, and illegal migration. Stable isotope ratios measured in human tissues document the foods consumed during life and the geographic location where drinking water or food was obtained. In this context, the method can be employed to identify undocumented and unclaimed human remains from the German East Africa colony in the case of the Tanzanian restitution plan. Thus, there is a dire need for quantitative and qualitative research on stable isotope ratios, particularly in the areas of ethnic groups or tribes mentioned in the ante mortem data of the individuals' human remains in question. Finally, matching the mitochondrial DNA of skeletal remains with descendants claiming the return of their loved ones will be a primary objective to obtain confirmatory results of the corresponding biological profile. Therefore, DNA technology will be utilized to trace ancestry, clan, or family information. By comparing DNA samples from the questioned human skeletal remains and from identified possible descendants or relatives currently present in Tanzania, we can positively establish the genetic identity of those individuals' skeletal remains beyond reasonable doubt.

Disagreements in Reparation Claims

There are several ongoing reparation claims from areas affected by colonialism. For example, it has been reported that kingdoms like Karagwe, Isike, Mangi Meli, Mkwawa, Songea, and Milambo in Tanzania were severely impacted by the German invasion. In addition to killing people, they also looted valuable items from those kingdoms (e.g., the Karagwe case). The affected communities, like these, want reparation and/or compensation. The royal families still exist and are legally recognized; they deserve to be compensated or counted towards reparations. If this matter of reparations is not taken seriously, it may create further obstacles in the restitution process here in Tanzania.

There is a need to acknowledge the families who demand reparations due to the harm caused by colonialism. However, the easiest way to solve this challenge is not to pay individual relatives who have claims, as in African societies, it is common to find a clan or family consisting of more than 100 people. Furthermore, due to the passage of time since the remains were taken, locating relatives or recipients of each individual skeletal remains may not be an easy matter. Instead, the Government can serve as the recipient of all the remains. Accordingly, it is important to understand the government's standpoint on reparations rather than focusing on individuals.

Inadequate Budget

Currently, the priority of Tanzania's national budget may not be on restitution but on other development activities. At present, most restitution studies rely on funding from foreign institutions, embassies, and other partners interested in implementing the return of human remains and cultural objects. If this is the case, the restitution exercise will depend on foreign support or relevant institutions interested in restoring the collections. Such dependence or inadequate budgeting may significantly affect the restitution efforts and hinder progress.

It is suggested that the best option to address these challenges is for Tanzania itself to demand royalties from foreign institutions or relevant countries holding the collections. Since the colonial period up to now, hosting countries and their institutions have benefited from exhibitions, research projects, and different methods through antiquity objects taken from Tanzania. Therefore, Tanzania has the right to claim royalties and devise an adequate financial plan for restitution or repatriation.

Conclusion

The above observations may evolve during implementation as the actual situation of restituting human remains evolves. Some of those human remains were exhumed and transported from the country during the colonial era without the consent of descendants. Additionally, hundreds of remains were taken in the process of expanding colonialism. This is why these innocent individuals deserve restitution and repatriation. They are the human remains of Tanzanian individuals; therefore, they will remain part of Tanzania as well. Decisions to bury them as heroes and to establish a memorial site for the victims of colonialism may be viable options. However, regardless of the talismanic perspectives on the handling and storage of human remains, there will be no significance in restitution without reparations. That is the greatest potential challenge expected in Tanzania's restitution and repatriation of human remains within the context of colonial history. It is also important to remind European nations to apologize for the troubles and harm they inflicted through colonialism. The killing of Africans and the effects of colonialism is not

something to be proud of. For European nations that colonized Africa, an apologetic approach will demonstrate respect and diplomatic satisfaction in reconciling with nations affected by colonialism, including issues such as land alienation, forced labor, high taxation, low wages, and humiliation. Conversely, reparations are akin to giving back what was taken. If Europeans genuinely respect, care for, and appreciate the independence of Africans, they should not feel proud to continue holding onto the human remains from this country as a symbol of their victory over the people of present-day Tanzania during the colonial era. Indeed, the perspectives on the handling and storage of human remains discussed in this article are formed under the taboos and cultural restrictions of Tanzanian societies, which view the restitution campaign as a tool for diplomatic reconciliation, hope, and mutual understanding at the international level. Tanzania will surely forgive all and let go, though it will never forget the history of colonialism.

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