

Klaus Bachmann / Joanna Bar (eds.)

German Colonialism in Africa



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In this volume, six experts from Europe and Africa present new insights from the field about various aspects of Germany's colonial rule in Africa, raising doubt about the hitherto interpretations of some important events. The outbreak of violence in Rwanda 1904 was neither an anti-colonial Hutu uprising nor the result of a royal court intrigue against German rule, but instead a response to raids, the White Father missionaries had carried out against the local population. German colonialism in Rwanda was much less benevolent than it is today recalled in Rwanda, because its main edge was directed against the population in the North whose collective memory has been marginalized in the royal abanyiginya narrative, under colonial rule and after the genocide. Other chapters deal with the link between colonial boundaries and ethnic conflict and the counter-intuitive consequences of the German/Namibian settlement about colonial atrocities against the Herero and Nama.

The Editors

Klaus Bachmann is a professor of social sciences at SWPS University in Warsaw, Poland. He has specialized in colonial history in Africa, transitional justice and international criminal justice.

Joanna Bar is an associate professor at the Institute of the Middle and Far East of the Jagiellonian University. Her research field centers around the social and political change in East African countries, with a particular focus on contemporary social and political changes in Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi.

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Introduction

The current public discussions about colonialism and its legacies, no matter if in Africa, Europe or Northern America, often relies on simple contrasts about good and evil, perpetrators and victims, contrasts, which neglect the nuances of collaboration, cooperation, the internalization of colonial stereotypes by those, who were colonized, their agency under colonial rule and the unequally distributed benefits and losses among indigenous populations and their elites.

The colonial centers' ignorance of pre-colonial realities on the ground was most striking in their determination to draw arbitrary boundaries across a continent, about which they had meagre knowledge and many pre-fabricated stereotypes. These boundaries helped to moderate and settle conflicts among the colonial centers, for example between Britain and Belgium, Britain and Germany, Germany and France or France and Britain. But at the same time, they became new hotbeds of regional conflict for the nations, ethnic groups, lineages and clans living in territories which these boundaries severed from each other. Joanna Bar and Ransom Tanyu Ngege describe this interaction between European conflict settlement and the emergence of African conflicts in their article about Cameroon.

But there is an additional picture behind the discussion about how colonial rule cut into pre-existing boundaries. In many cases, these pre-colonial boundaries were neither natural nor ethnically unambiguous. They had been established by conquest, too. Klaus Bachmann describes the example of Ijwi Island, today a rather remote and forgotten island in the Kivu Lake, which belongs to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In the nineteenth century, it was conquered by the Rwandan king Rwabugiri¹, who installed a local collaborator (regarded as traitor by the Ijwi political leadership) and established a similar kind of indirect rule as later the Germans did in Rwanda proper. Rwabugiri's rule on Ijwi was short-lived and broke down after the Rucunshu coup at the end of the nineteenth century had deprived his son of the drum (the Rwandan counterpart to royal crowns in Europe) and elevated the rival *abega*-clan to supreme power in the kingdom.² With the advent of the Europeans, Ijwi became

1 Kigeli (also: Kigeri) IV Rwabugiri.

2 Rwandan lineage and clan names are always given according to the original spelling in Kinyarwanda. Hutu, Tutsi and Twa appear as *umuhutu* (singular) and *abahutu* (plural), *umutusi* and *abatutsi*, *umutwa* and *abatwa* when they are treated as social strata (before

a territory of German protestant conversion and remained so after Belgian took it over (and merged it with the Belgian Congo) in 1910, despite the outspoken German nationalism of the protestant missionaries. Until 1910, the island had belonged to the Rwandan kingdom and to German East Africa.

Two chapters of this book specifically deal with the blind spots of the current media debate about colonialism, post-colonialism and colonial legacies. They both show, how the unequal treatment of indigenous groups on the ground reinforced existing social and later ethnic cleavages and created patterns of legitimization, whose influence can be traced until today. Until today, Rwandans see German colonial rule in a rather rosy light, because, as the story goes, the Germans respected the local habits and the existing institutions, cooperated with king Musinga and strengthened his rule over territories, where this rule was contested. Klaus Bachmann demonstrates that the German *Schutztruppe's* (the colonial army) conduct in Rwanda did not much differ from its conduct in other parts of Africa: everywhere it used its limited military power to strengthen cooperative groups on the ground against insurgent ones, often with no regard for the civilian population and those insurgents' traditional customs and institutions. In Rwanda, the German soldiers submerged the rebellious northern kingdoms in Mulera and Rukiga carrying out murderous campaigns, but because this was beneficial for the royal court in Nyanza and because many people (largely independent of their ethnic affiliation) in Rwanda identify with the royal *abanyiginya* tradition, German colonial rule appears as almost benevolent to them. This would be different, if the northern perspective were included in the way, how Rwandans today interpret their past, but the views from Rwanda's peripheral regions have been silenced in recent decades. Assumpta Mugiraneza shows, how the absence of knowledge about pre-colonial Rwanda reinforces the internalization of a retrospective neo-colonial perspective about Rwanda today. People see it as natural to have a capital like Kigali, which, historically seen, only existed as a capital-like settlement during the short time when Germany maintained its civil *Residentur* there (and after independence), while for most of Rwanda's history, the king's residences were scattered across the country, the only permanent royal seat being (beginning with Musinga's rule) Nyanza, not Kigali. Under Belgian rule, Nyanza remained the king's permanent place, while the capital was moved to Butare, then renamed Astrida (after Astrid of Sweden, a Swedish princess and later wife of Belgian king Leopold III). In Rwanda, history before the Belgians

the 1930s) and as Hutu, Tutsi and Twa when they appear as ethnic groups. The use of these names is different in Stefaan Minnaert's chapter.

means mostly German colonial rule and colonial remnants enjoy better conservation and more popularity than places which were more intimately linked with Rwandan (rather than German colonial) history, as Assumpta Mugiraneza demonstrates – and tries to enroot again in Rwandan society with her center and its activities.

The popular understanding of colonialism as exploitative and abusive European governance of Africans by European countries sometimes is also at odds with the reality on the ground because of rather unexpected and seldom understood interactions among Europeans. Formally, Rwanda was a German colony and that state of things was recognized by other colonial nations. But the strongest impact on everyday life in Rwanda proper (the realm of the Rwandan king) did not have German soldiers or German bureaucrats, but the Congregation of Missionaries of Africa, called the “White Fathers”, whose members had arrived long before Germany created its first civilian outpost in Kigali. The White Fathers were German subjects, but in many, many cases their citizenship was the result of Germany’s annexation of Alsace-Lorraine after the Prussian-French War in 1870/71; the missionaries felt French, spoke French (French was the official language imposed on the congregation members even in cases when members from the same country were together of whom none had French as a native language). Some, like bishop Jean-Joseph Hirth, kept their French citizenship. For Rwandans as well as for visitors from outside Germany, the mission was French and their mission territory regarded as French territory, notwithstanding its status under international law. It was the mission, not the *Schutztruppe*, that changed the relations on the ground between *abahutu* and *abatutsi*, interfered in court proceedings, negotiated between Germans and wealthy *abatutsi* chiefs in the regions and the royal court in Nyanza. They were armed. The mission had arrived with heavily armed inhabitants of the adjacent Buganda kingdom, with whom they had fled the violence there, their mission stations often looked like fortresses and the missionaries were determinate to use the gun as well as the bible to convert the locals. In 1904, the German army came to their rescue, subduing an upheaval in and around Rwaza, that at least has been the prevailing interpretation of these events in the literature so far. Stefaan Minnaert, himself a former White Father, historian and archivist, describes how the story looked like in the light of the respective missionaries’ internal correspondence: the conflict had started because they had settled a dispute with local chiefs by force, raiding and looting the region.

Klaus Bachmann points to some other aspects, where missionary reports, diaries and chronicles must be taken with one or even several grains of salt: violence is almost absent from these publications and records, as is a popular way

of converting children by kidnapping them from their families. Bachmann also shows the remarkable evolution which the meaning of “slavery” underwent over time: already being a Catholic concept of anti-Muslim propaganda in the nineteenth century, it turned into a cornerstone of the public ideological quarrel between the White Father leadership and the German administration, with the first exaggerating Muslim influence and slave trade in Rwanda and the Germans downplaying it before the German public. The meaning later shifted turning the trope of “Muslims enslaving Rwandans” into “Tutsi enslaving Hutu” and became a powerful tool in the power struggle during late Belgian rule and in the two Rwandan republics, when Hutu nationalism stereotyped “the Tutsi” into descendants of slave-owners and “the Hutu” into their collective victims, equating the *abanyiginya* monarchy with slavery and ethnic oppression. The evolution escalated during the genocide in 1994, but its origins are rooted in the ideological fights of the late nineteenth century, when, as all sources indicate, actual slave trade was marginal in Rwanda and individual serfdom relatively humane.

There are yet two other chapters which show, how the colonial past throws its shadow over today’s politics: In Rwanda, the way the Belgians dealt with the first famine they encountered there, bolstered a new way of looking at colonial rights and obligations. By using the 1917 famine and the Belgian response to it as a propaganda tool supporting their diplomatic claims to Rwanda, the Belgian government implicitly acknowledged the agency of Rwandans and their right to good governance, something which went beyond the purely exploitative policy of colonial centers in their traditional colonies. This backfired after World War II, when their approach to the 1944 famine undermined the legitimacy of their rule in Rwanda as well as of the traditional institutions of the country. It is then, Bachmann claims, when the erosion of colonial and traditional governance started, which led to the violence in the late 1950s and to independence. The article about Namibia shows, in contrast, how the hermetic legal framework for addressing colonial atrocities pushes African interest groups to embark on formally legal, but mainly political strategies of litigation and it shows, why this ended with a contested success in the case of Namibian – German negotiations over the Herero and Nama genocides at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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3 German-Polish Science Foundation: Project 2018/27 “The achievements of Polish and German anthropology about Rwanda” (Die Errungenschaften der deutschen und polnischen Anthropologie im Bezug auf Rwanda).

Klaus Bachmann

1. Benevolent colonialism? German colonial rule and the reconstruction of Rwanda's history today⁴

Talking today about German colonialism in Rwanda is an easy task, opposite to other African countries like Namibia and Tanzania. There, indigenous groups emphasize collective victimhood in the context of the genocide against the Herero and Nama (1904–1907) and the quashing of the Maji-Maji uprising (1904) political actors have issued compensation claims to Germany.⁵ In Rwanda, the picture of German colonialism is rather fragmented, rosy and devoid of emotions. According to popular representations, the Germans supported King Yuhi V Musinga, helped to consolidate his power subduing the Northern kingdoms in Mulera and Rukiga by force. Last but not least, German rule over Rwanda was limited: beside several military outposts, whose main purpose was to bolster Germany's territorial claims to Rwanda towards Britain and Belgium, the *Gouvernement* in Daressalam administered Rwanda from Usumbura and installed a resident only between 1908 and 1916. The Germans did not interfere in domestic affairs; they left the existing political order untouched, regarding it as a factor of stability.⁶ Even the attempt to control the King's power over life and death of his underlings was illusory. The German *Residentur* and the military command exercised this control only with respect to Europeans. Until today, there are a lot of popular stereotypes and fragmentary anecdotes about German rule in Rwanda, which range from positive ones to representations ridiculing the Germans and when asked about Germany, Rwandans usually emphasize German development aid, cultural initiatives and respect for German exports and technology rather

4 Research for this article was sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN grant no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02497 "A history of Rwanda").

5 Bachmann, Klaus, and Gerhard Kemp: "Was Quashing the Maji-Maji Uprising Genocide? An Evaluation of Germany's Conduct through the Lens of International Criminal Law." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35.2 (2021), 235–249.

6 Byanafashe, Déo, and Rutayisire, Paul: *History of Rwanda. From the Beginning to the End of the Twentieth Century*. Kigali: National Unity and Reconciliation Commission 2016, 198–202.

than anti-colonial accusations or claims about victimhood.⁷ German rule in Rwanda also appears in a mild light as compared to Belgian colonial rule, which is strongly associated with the measures to divide the population into Hutu and Tutsi, which, in return, is regarded as a step on the way to the 1994 genocide. German rule also was less atrocious than the country's conduct in German South West Africa and in Tanganyika.

One coup, two narratives

There are several problems with these merciful representations of German rule in Rwanda. None of them is directly related to German-Rwandan relations or a dissonance between the way Germans and Rwandans view the beginning of the nineteenth century in the Great Lakes region today. They all have to do with Rwanda's domestic politics.

First, this rosy picture of German colonial rule has its roots in the *abanyiginya* tradition, which equals Rwanda with *abanyiginya* rule. From this perspective, the Northern kingdoms belonged to Rwanda (that is to the royal court's sphere of power) but had rebelled against it after the Rucunshu coup.⁸ The joint expeditions of the Germans together with White Fathers and their Ganda assistants in 1904 and later in 1912 had shattered the northern kingdoms, allowed the court notables to return to these territories, impose their governance and land tenure system and to extort taxes. From King Musinga's point of view, the Germans' raids had returned things to normal. For the northern kingdoms, these raids had ended their independence from the royal court and brought *abatutsi* rule back. The same can be said about the Basebya and the Ndungutse uprisings, Rukara's rebellion against Musinga and the rise of the *nyabingi* cult under Muhumusa

7 Marcinkowska, Karolina: "Spoken Heritage: Pre-colonial Rwanda from the Contemporary Rwandan Perspective" in: Bachmann, Klaus et al.: *Every Day Life in Early Colonial Rwanda: Insights from German and Polish Sources. With Cooperation of Karolina Marcinkowska, Joanna Bar and Marius Kowalak*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2020, 9–28.

8 The Rucunshu coup was the successful attempt to overthrow King Rwabugiri's successor and son, Rutarindwa and replace him with Musinga, the biological son of his wife Kanjogera. Rutarindwa was the son of another of Rwabugiri's wife whom Rwabugiri had killed during a court intrigue following the death of this predecessor, Rwogera. See: Ruanda 1895, avènement de Mibambwe IV (Rutarindwa), typescript, Derscheid Collection, University of Florida.

between 1904 and 1912.⁹ When the German *Schutztruppe* quashed these revolts, it consolidated Musinga's power, extended the influence of the royal court over distant territories but abolished smaller, peripheral kingdoms with their own political systems, traditions and rulers.

For Musinga, the Germans had crushed rebellions against his (legitimate) rule, for the rebels, they had forcefully and violently helped to maintain an illegitimate ruler in power, whose rule was based on violence rather than on the traditional legitimacy of the esoteric code.¹⁰ For them, Musinga had become king because his uncles had usurped power for him to the detriment of the legitimate ruler, Rwabugiri's son Rutarindwa.

There is strong evidence about earlier unconstitutional coups, which had brought to power rulers who were not entitled to become kings, but because of the strong control, the court and its guardians of the esoteric code had exercised over the oral tradition and the official historical narratives, the perspective of the loser had been silenced. Rucunshu took place a few years before the arrival of Europeans, when many participants and observers of the coup were able to spread their version of the events and when the Europeans could put them down in writing. Therefore, Rucunshu is the only such violation of the code, about which we know so many details; and the only one, about which we can establish the perspective of both sides, the winners and the losers.

For quite a long time, the winners again managed to impose their narrative. According to it Musinga appeared as the legitimate ruler, his opponents as rebels and the Germans as those, who helped Musinga to force the rebels to surrender and consolidate his power, the territory of the kingdom and uphold *abanyiginya*

9 Basebya was the ruler of a small *abatwa* polity in the North, Ndungutse was a rebel from there who entered into an ally with Basebya. The *naybingi* cult was a larger charismatic movement in Rwanda, the Buganda kingdom and Western Tanganyika which linked religious and political elements. Freedman, John: "Ritual and History. The Case of Nyabingi", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, vol. 14, cah. 53, 1974, 170–180; Turyahikayo-Rugyema, Benoni: "Bakiga institutions of government", *Uganda Journal* vol. 40, 1982, 14–28.

10 The Esoteric Code is a notion introduced by Rwandan historian and priest Alexis Kagame, who wrote down the oral rules for court procedure and succession in European-style legal language (and even with articles and paragraphs like in a bill). Kagame, Alexis: "Le code ésotérique de la dynastie du Rwanda", *Zaire* 1, 1947, 363–386; Kagame, Alexis: *Le Code des institutions politiques du Rwanda précolonial*. Bruxelles: ARSOM 1952.

control over the historical narrative. Later, Alexis Kagame's writings contributed to bolstering and enrooting it as the only legitimate version of the past.¹¹

This changed with the advent of independence, when Rwanda became a de facto Hutu nation state and the *abakiga* were uplifted to the position of "true Rwandans". The Kayibanda and – to a much larger extent – the Habyarimana years discarded the *abanyiginya* tradition and *abatutsi* governance as a form of enslavement of the Hutu and turned Rwanda's peasant traditions into a narrative of oppression and slavery. In the political struggle after the death of king Rudahigwa in 1959, the monarchy, the *abanyiginya* tradition, Tutsi rule over Hutu, *uburetwa* and *umukonde* all merged into a narrative which praised peasantry, the traditions of the "défricheurs du bois" and rejected cattle ownership and the rule of notables as a form of domestic colonial oppression.¹² The boundaries between colonialism, slavery, monarchy and land tenure systems became blurred, state propaganda presented the Tutsi as slave owners and Hutu as their slave-like victims. For many contemporary observers, the moral impact of these claims was compelling, despite the many Hutu chiefs, the Belgian administration had installed in 1959 and the alliance, which the Hutu movement had concluded with the Belgian administration to isolate the monarchists after 1959. The political struggle pushed the monarchists into an anti-colonialist corner, where they could only count on the support of the Soviet block and non-aligned socialist countries. From today's perspective, the result was absurd: *L'Union nationale rwandaise* (UNAR), a party that gathered die-hard monarchists and supporters of a constitutional monarchy appeared as a communist force in the light of Catholic propaganda, while it comprised people who wanted, in one form or the other, restore old and traditional modes of governance, social relations and societal hierarchies.¹³

One must keep these implications in mind when trying to understand, why so many Rwandans (including some historians) until today consider German

11 Vidal, Claudine: "Alexis Kagame (1912–1981)" in: Vidal, Claudine: *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire*. Karthala 1991, 45–61; Vidal, Claudine: "Alexis Kagame entre mémoire et histoire". *History in Africa* 15, 1988, 493–504.

12 Kangura 6 from December 199; Desrosiers, Marie-Eve: "Rethinking Political Rhetoric and Authority During Rwanda's First and Second Republics." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 2014, 199–225.

Desrosiers, Marie-Eve: "'Making do' With Soft Authoritarianism in Pre-Genocide Rwanda." *Comparative Politics* 52.4, 2020, 557–579.

13 Carney, James: *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014, 158–159.

colonial rule as rather unproblematic, moderate or even beneficial for Rwanda. This is linked to the way, the Germans' support for the court in Nyanza, for *abanyiginya* rule and their raids against the Northerners were exploited by political actors and historians with political agendas after Rwanda's independence in 1961.

Regional conflict versus ethnic struggle

After independence, young doctoral researchers at the National University of Rwanda started to rehabilitate the Northern (and sometimes also the South-Western) kingdoms, which had kept a considerable degree of autonomy until the German pacification raids and, in the case of the Southwestern kingdoms, until their abolition by the Belgians during the 1920s. They travelled across the North, talked to local leaders and elders and merged their findings with re-interpretations of the existing literature from Jan Czekanowski and Albert Pagès to Alexis Kagame and Jan Vansina.¹⁴ An important part of this tendency played

14 Nahimana, Ferdinand: «Les Bami ou Roitelets hutu du corridor Nyabarongo-Mukungwa avec ses régions limitrophes», *Etudes Rwandaises*, vol XII, n° spécial, mars, 1979, 1–25; Nahimana, Ferdinand: «Les normes de l'historiographie du Rwanda» dans: Actes du Colloque National sur la Politique Culturelle (Kigali-Rwanda. 18–24 mai 1980), publiés dans Education et Culture, n07-8, 1980, 69–79; Nahimana, Ferdinand: «Les principautés hutu du Rwanda septentrional» dans: La civilisation ancienne des peuples des Grands Lacs. Colloque de Bujumbura (4–10 septembre 1979), Paris, Editions Karthala -Centre de Civilisation Burundaise, 1981, 115–137; Nahimana, Ferdinand: «Expansion du pouvoir central des rois abanyiginya au Rwanda septentrional: mythes et réalités», Uburezi, Ubuganga n'Umucyo – Education Science et Culture, n03, juillet-septembre 1982, 41–85; Nahimana, Ferdinand: *Le Blanc est arrivé, le Roi est parti. Une facette de l'histoire du Rwanda contemporain: 1894–1931*, Kigali, Imprimerie Printer Set, 1987; Nahimana, Ferdinand: *Le clan et l'histoire régionale. Exemple du clan Ababanda de Ruhengeri-Rwanda*, Mémoire de Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies – Histoire de l'Afrique Noire, Université Paris Vil, 1985; Ntezimana, Emmanuel: «Coutumes et traditions des royaumes du Bukunzi et du Busozo», *Etudes Rwandaises*, avril 1980, 15–39; Ntezimana, Emmanuel: «L'arrivée des Européens au Kinyaga et la fin des royaumes hutu du Bukunzi et du Busozo», *Etudes Rwandaises*, juin 1980, 1–29; Hakazimana, Alexis: *L'évolution socio-politique du Bushiru de 1740 à 1925*, Mémoire de Licence en Histoire, Université Nationale du Rwanda-Ruhengeri, 1985; Hukuzimana, Ferdinand: *L'évolution socio-politique de deux lignages Abacocori et Abagirimana dits «Abagowe» du XVI^e siècle à 1961*, Mémoire de Licence en Histoire, Université Nationale du Rwanda – Campus de Ruhengeri,

an anonymous account drawn up by local chiefs during the 1950s, which contained more detailed information about Northern lineages than had previously been known.¹⁵

This could have been an enriching contribution to regional history, but it was more. Due to the political struggle during and after independence and the emergence of a strong Hutu-Tutsi cleavage, this exercise in oral history of Rwandan regions turned quickly into an element of the political struggle about the control of historical narratives. Its problematic crux was the concept of these little kingdoms in the North and Southwest as “Hutu kingdoms”. There is little doubt that they were more than just vertically organized lineages, whose leaders kept power due to the violence they could display in- and outside their territory. They also possessed traditional and functional legitimacy: they were rainmakers, could prevent natural disaster, curse pests and varmints, conclude agreements with neighbouring kingdoms and solved conflicts among their underlings. Land tenure was collective; and if the local king sent gifts to Nyanza, he also received gifts from Musinga.¹⁶

It is quite likely these local kings had created a political system, which the *abanyiginya* had taken over (together with the language Kinyarwanda and the nucleus of the esoteric code's succession rules). This is, by the way, very likely if this takeover of power by the *abanyiginya* was slow and peaceful rather than a violent invasion. It would have been the result of a process of slow, gradual and mutual acculturation between sedentary peasants and nomadic cattle holders. However, under the assumption of fast and violent migration flows by which the

1989; Hitabatuma, Ildephonse: *Evolution historique de l' »Ubukonde» au Rwanda. L'exemple du Nyantango*, Mémoire de Licence en Histoire, Université Nationale du Rwanda, Ruhengeri, 1982; Ngirishuti, Frédéric: *Le lignage Ibishugi: ses chefs et l'histoire régionale du Kinyaga (1899 – 1959)*, Mémoire de Licence en Histoire, Université Nationale du Rwanda, Campus de Ruhengeri, 1982; Nsengimana, Innocent: *Le lignage des Abarashi du clan Abacyaba du Murera: Essai d'étude socio-politique (1741–1925)*, Ruhengeri, 1989; Ntamugabumwe, Jean Baptiste: *La principauté du Cyirigongo des origines à 1930*, Mémoire de fin de premier cycle en sciences humaines, Institut Pédagogique National, Butare, 1981; Nyagahene, Antoine: *Traditions dynastiques et traditions populaires. Centre et périphérie: A propos de l'histoire du Rwanda ancien: culture endogène ou culutre exogène?*, Mémoire de Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies en Histoire de l'Afrique Noire, Université Paris I (CRA).

15 Anonyme: *Historique et Chronologie du Ruanda*, (no place) 1956. For the background see: Nahimana, *Ruanda, émergence d'un état*, 142.

16 Nahimana, *Ruanda, émergence d'un état*, 241.

Tutsi were alleged to have subdued the Hutu in Rwanda, the empirical results of this research produced a narrative that turned the Hamitic myth upside down. For many decades, the theory about belligerent Hamitic invaders from the North had served as the main argument to justify Tutsi rule in the eyes of the Europeans. During and after independence it became a victim-centered narrative which was invoked to justify first Hutu rule (they were the alleged oppressed majority) and second the persecution of Tutsi in the name of historical justice and the anti-colonial struggle. The Northern kingdoms, which the *abanyiginya* had labelled rebels (*abahinza*), became the allegedly real Rwandans, the salt of the Rwandan Earth, the polities, whose political order the *abanyiginya* had adopted – hence the morally and culturally supreme ones. To paraphrase a famous sentence from Pagès: the Tutsi (here equated with the *abanyiginya*) had laid down in the beds the Hutu had made. Now, the Hutu guests declared themselves the bed-owners and chased their hosts out of the hut.¹⁷ It is obvious that all this was an exercise in collective responsibility by ethnic association: the Tutsi were associated with the *abanyiginya* tradition (which in itself had emerged long before the concept of ethnicity had come into being) and every Tutsi was regarded responsible for the past actions of his group, while after 1959, the Hutu instituted themselves as the morally legitimate rulers of the country in the name of “historical justice” by drawing a line between every Hutu and the past actions of other Hutu. Without the inherent concept of collective responsibility neither Hutu nor Tutsi claims about who was historically right or wrong would have worked. The equation of the ruling lineages of the Northern kingdoms with “the Hutu” was only possible, because the authors of these works projected the contemporary ethnic understanding of Hutu and Tutsi back into the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Back then, the rulers of the Northern kingdoms had called themselves “umwani”, some of them (like Rukara) urged their followers even to call them *abatutsi*.¹⁸ There is fragmentary evidence according to which Rukara and Musinga mutually regarded each other as rebels. This is easier to understand if one assumes Rukara to be one of the beneficiaries of Rwabugiri’s rule and a loser of the Rucunshu coup. Musinga would then be a usurper of the drum in Rukara’s eyes and Rukara a contestor of Musinga’s rule in Nyanza.¹⁹

17 De Lacger, Louis: *Le Ruanda ancien*, Kabgayi 1939, 32.

18 Nahimana, Ferdinand: *Le Ruanda, l'émergence d'un état*, Paris: Harmattan 1993, 193.

19 Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde (further: BArch) R1001.702–703, „1912 Rebellion“. Der Kaiserliche Resident für Ruanda betr. Die Ermordung des Pater Loupias, Kigali 25.5.1910, 93–94; Kabagema, Innocent: *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft 1899–1916*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1993, 197–211.

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were no ethnic groups in Rwanda, at least not in the sense, Europeans referred to this concept. *Abahutu*, *abatutsi* and *abatwa* did not have collective agency as groups, they did not have polities which enabled them to take collective decisions, they had no clear political hierarchy and they were (with the exception of some *abahutu* and some *abatutsi*) not aware of their common cultural, national or ethnic features. They could not be aware of them, because they lacked literacy, the opportunity to travel and a common ideology. Under the well-established and stable rule of the *abanyiginya* in Nduga and Bwanacyambwe, an *umututsi* was a wealthy man with servants and people depending on him and the symbol of his status was cattle. An *umuhutu* was a poor man, who sought the protection of a wealthier one. In central Rwanda, the difference was a social one and it was flexible: due to cattle diseases, wars and famines powerful lineages could lose their power (and their cattle), others could rise in power (and wealth) and – through intermarriage – rise from Hutu to Tutsi and vice-versa. Social mobility was limited for *abatwa*, but influent *abatwa* families could make a career at the royal court and become advisors, guardians and executors of the king's verdicts.

The situation was different outside the well-established and firm rule of the royal court. There, collective ownership left the land in the hands of the lineages. The latter had their own succession rules, untouched by the esoteric code in Nyanza and cattle and landownership were widespread (and often in the hands of the same people) and tax collection served the needs of the lineages, not of a distant ruler. While the lineage heads (alike the *abatutsi* notables) had some collective agency, there is no indication they also were aware if their common cultural features linked them to the alleged "Hutu-kingdoms" in the Southwest. There was no awareness of a common destiny as Hutu neither among the polities in the North nor between those in the North and Southwest. Outside *abanyiginya* rule, being an *umututsi* described the relation of that person (and its extended family) to the royal court. In Mulera, Rukiga, Kinyaga, Busonzi and Bukonzo *abatutsi* were governors, who terrorized the local population, grabbed the land of the lineages, transforming it into *umukonde* plots, making the owners their hereditary tributaries and extorted taxes for the King.²⁰ In other words: "Tutsi" was a political rather than a social or ethnic affiliation. If someone was a *umuhutu* or *umututsi* depended on the King's decision, not on some hereditary traits, physical features, ancestry or kinship. The latter played a role in the King's decision

20 Newbury, Catharine: *The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press 1980, 51–52.

whom to send to a remote terrain and whom not. Loyal, wealthy and well renowned lineages were more likely to be sent to a province than disloyal, poor and unknown ones, but there was no ethnic key to such nominations. Neither did such a nomination change the respective lineage's ethnicity.

Therefore, being *umuhutu* in Nduga meant something else than being *umuhutu* outside Musinga's realm. And while one may attribute the lineages which ruled the Northern and Southwestern kingdoms collective agency and awareness of a common identity within their polities (just like the *abatutsi* notables wielded such agency within their lineages and at the royal court), there was no ethnic group as "the Hutu", which could act on behalf and in favor of all Hutu – those inside and outside Nduga. At the end of the day, an *abahutu* lineage in Nduga did not have the same economic interests and social contacts as a *abahutu* lineage in Mulera. They paid different taxes, lived under different land tenure systems and had different experiences of and imaginations about the past. All they had in common, were language and religion, but that they also had in common with the *abatutsi*. The conflict, which opposed the polities in the North and Southwest to the court in Nyanza and to *abatutsi* rule outside Nduga, was a regional one. Sometimes, it had some cultural implications, too. Stereotyping was paramount between inhabitants of Nduga and the *abakiga*, the mountain people that lacked the fine customs of the court notables and instead had to deal with a much rougher and harsher natural environment than the inhabitants of the central kingdom. For them, the *abakiga* were notorious thieves, unreliable, insidious creatures without any civilized rules.

The conflict between the royal court and the independent polities at its periphery were neither ethnic nor social, but regional – a typical center-periphery conflict about centralization versus regional autonomy and mutual stereotyping. In that light, the Germans neither abolished Hutu kingdoms, nor did they consolidate Rwanda's (or the King's) lands, instead they took part in a regional conflict over political power, strengthening the center and weakening the peripheral polities.

But if one conceives the northern kingdoms as independent (ethnic) Hutu polities, whose legitimacy was just as well-grounded as the one of the royal court and the *abanyiginya* tradition, then German support for Musinga and the consolidation of this power in the periphery ceases to be an example of benevolent colonialism. It then becomes the brutal foreign intervention in a domestic power struggle between Hutu and Tutsi and many of the differences between German colonial conduct in Tanganyika during the Wahehe and Maji-Maji uprisings and German South West Africa on the one hand and their indirect rule in Rwanda vanish. It becomes a number of raids, by which the German military

quashed uprisings of one ethnic group against the rule of another ethnic group or, to use contemporary language, of the “Hutu race” against the “Tutsi race”. In other words: German colonial conduct in Rwanda may appear as moderate, mild and even benevolent only from a *abanyiginya* perspective. But if we want to depict it as a brutal, ruthless colonial adventure directed against Rwanda, we have to adopt a Hutu nationalist perspective, which sees the local polities which the German rifles quashed as antecedents of the nationalist Hutu polity, which Rwanda became after 1959. If we accept the *abanyiginya* tradition as the foundation of Rwanda today, it is difficult to blame the Germans for their conduct. If we accept Hutu nationalism (and the peasant mythology of the “wood clearers”), the Germans delayed, hampered and in some cases even prevented the development of the *abanyiginya* monarchy into a Hutu nation state. From such a perspective, nothing is left of the alleged benevolent state-building effort which sometimes is ascribed to Richard Kandt, Max Wintgens and Eberhard Gudowius. Here is the reason, why downplaying the impact of German colonial rule on Rwanda is more likely to trigger comprehension in Rwanda today than attacking it from an anti-colonial angle: Under the paradigm of a Hutu-Tutsi cleavage stretching back to the early twentieth century, one can only accuse the Germans of colonial misconduct if one also accepts the regional polities they quashed as the early nuclei of Rwandan statehood – a statehood founded on Hutu nationalism. After the genocide against the Tutsi and several decades of judicial reckoning with it this is hardly an option for Rwandans today and would not fit at all into the official historical narrative of the ruling political establishment. It is easier, to exempt the Germans from the misdemeanors colonialism is blamed for.

There is yet another problem with the notion of Germany’s alleged benevolent colonialism: one does not need to reject *abanyiginya* tradition retrospectively to find it problematic. Under German rule, a very problematic concept of slavery emerged, which later shed its shadow over the Hutu-Tutsi conflict, contributing to the latter’s escalation at the end of Belgian rule and during independence. This concept was a by-product of the White Father missionaries’ religious propaganda in Europe and it emerged in the context of a conflict of interests between them and the administration of German East Africa.

Mutual stereotyping in early colonial times

All this explains the mild light in which German colonial rule is seen today. But it does not explain the link between past stereotyping and the advent of the slavery *topos* in the struggle for power during the 1950s and later. What enabled Hutu nationalists after the 1950s to present the Tutsi, rather than the Belgians as

the “real colonizers” and themselves as the descendants of slaves and the victims of slavery? There is more behind that than just political propaganda in a heated struggle over power and access to resources. One needs to look into the shifts in the meaning of the understanding of slavery, which occurred between the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century. While the interpretation of the Germans’ conduct in Rukiga and Mulera depends on the definition of Rwanda (now and then) as a Hutu nation state versus an interethnic state based on the *abanyiginya* tradition, the explanation of the slavery topic in Hutu-Tutsi relations is a purely European one. It is closely linked to domestic German politics and the different political agendas of the German colonial administration and the Congregation of the Missionaries of Africa, better known as the White Father Congregation.

The first men (there were no women among them) who arrived in Rwanda were, apart from travellers and Arab and Indian traders, the White Fathers, catholic missionaries from the “The Society of Missionaries of Africa” in Algiers. They were also the first with a genuine interest in the local population and the intent to stay in the country, whereas traders usually minded their business and travellers were more interested in nature, animals, and the landscape (especially the rivers and the Virunga craters) than in the population and its habits, customs, and laws. When the missionaries arrived, Germany still held an outpost in Shengi on the southern shore of Lake Kivu, but its task was not to control the local population, but to mark the coastline as German territory. It was a purely symbolic presence, with no military significance and no colonial tasks.²¹ German officers and commanders used to write reports, letters, and private diaries, some of which were later published. But they usually (with the exception of Richard Kandt) lacked a deeper knowledge of the country and did not understand or speak Kinyarwanda.²² The White Fathers were different, they quickly learned Kinyarwanda and often also Swahili and used to live among the local population. This did not prevent them from spreading stereotypes, prejudices and propaganda. The Hamitic myth is just the most glaring example thereof. What is less well known, is the other side of this coin: the missionaries became objects of ridicule and stereotyping by Rwandans. The fathers were quickly surrounded by gossip, fears, hope, and expectations which they could hardly deal with, mainly

21 It had some influence on the social fabric of its immediate neighbourhood, which is well explained in Newbury, Catharine: *The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press 1988, 54–57.

22 Kandt, who later learned Kinyarwanda, at first also relied on a translator.

because they were not aware of them at all and did not understand them. Historians would later learn about them, but only from the notes the missionaries left in their diaries and chronicles. The other side of the equation, the Rwandans did not leave notes. Therefore, it is impossible to assess retrospectively how these prejudices, stereotypes and myths about the White Fathers really looked like and whether these descriptions told something about the real rumour going around in the country, or whether they were based on the Fathers' misunderstandings about these rumours. It is noticeable, though, that almost all rumours were negative. Rwandans, no matter from which social strata, used to stereotype Europeans just as much as the Europeans did about them. They were labelled "redheads" (*ibituku*) and "wild beasts" (*ibikoko*), and their mission compounds were believed to enclose secret tunnels through which children were sent to Europe. The Sacré Coeur cult at Save gave rise to rumours about the Fathers' cannibalism. When in November 1903, Father Léon Weckerle walked across the hills of the Kivu shore with a drum-beating child in front of him, the villagers hid in the fields, because they regarded the Whites as cannibals.²³ They were suspected of eating their disciples' hearts. When children brought home a medal which the Fathers gave to children who were ready to be baptised, their parents punished them, because they saw the medal as an amulet that could expose them to charges of sorcery. Brard's donkey triggered as many rumours and legends as the bicycle of one of his colleagues.²⁴ Czekanowski enumerates a plethora of *abatutsi* stereotypes about Europeans, but it is impossible to say, if *abatutsi* really shared these stereotypes or if they were an attribution by missionaries, who had shared their suspicion with Czekanowski. Both, missionaries and Czekanowski, had very limited contact with *abatutsi*, exactly because of the latter's mistrust towards Europeans.²⁵

For wealthier Rwandans, the missions became potential shelters from persecution by rivals, for the poorer part of the population they were trade posts, pharmacies and sanctuaries during riots and famines. For the few Europeans who came to Rwanda, the missions were often the first contact on the ground

23 Nsengimana, Innocent: *Le Rwanda et le pouvoir européen (1894–1952), quelles mutations?*, Frankfurt 2003 (Nsengimana refers to a White Father Chronicle (numbered 100, 191) on an unnumbered page of his book.

24 Linden, Ian: *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda*. Paris: Karthala 1999, 69.

25 Czekanowski, Jan: *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo-Zwischengebiet*. Leipzig 1911–1927; Bd. I, *Ethnographie. Zwischenseengebiet. Mpororo / Ruanda. Mit einem musikalischen Anhang von. E. M. v. Hornbostel*. Leipzig 1917, 126.

and mediators with the local chiefs. The missionaries wrote reports and letters to their superiors in Algiers and Europe and to the German administration and the German military outposts, and after 1916 also to the Belgian authorities; they accommodated travellers and researchers, served as interpreters and intermediaries between these guests and the locals. They often had their own interests and their own agenda, which transpires through their actions and writings, but their records are a rich source on social life in early colonial Rwanda.

Some of the White Fathers already had an inclination towards history and anthropology when they arrived in Rwanda, while others developed such an interest during their stay. Initially, they published in their own outlets which targeted the European public to raise funds and to canvass support for the missions. They pressed the evidence they found in Rwanda into the pre-fabricated frames and interpretations they had brought from Europe, and, because topics of race, expansion, war, rivalry between nations, ethnic conflicts were then paramount in Europe, they projected these onto Rwandans, Rwandan society, and the social relations they found on the ground. Some of these missionary-researchers later pursued careers at universities, others returned home (some also died in Rwanda) and only left behind their articles in *Der Afrikabote*, *Grands Lacs* or other religious publications. Usually, they shared a feeling of racial supremacy about the “negroes”, whom they regarded as lazy, childish, unable to make strategic considerations, reckless, and unbridled. Over time, these stereotypes also changed. In the White Father publications one can trace the emergence of intelligent, adamant, treacherous, and untrustworthy Tutsi as well as ponderous, simple-minded, hard-working Hutu, whom the Tutsi allegedly oppressed. This was not only an echo of European race theory and its application to Rwanda’s social fabric, it also reflected the White Fathers’ initial inability to convert members of the ruling elite and the fact that mostly poor peasants and outcasts frequented the mission stations, searching for support against their local chiefs and rival lineages.

The controversy about slavery in Rwanda

The missionaries arrived in Rwanda to convert the ruling elite in order to create a catholic monarchy in Africa. This at least had been the initial vision of the Congregation’s founder, Cardinal Charles Martial Allemand-Lavigerie and his successors Léon Lavinhac and Jean-Joseph Hirth. In their propaganda in Europe, they stressed other objectives: to spread the Catholic faith in Africa, to fight slavery and the expansion of Islam. They often treated Islam and slavery as two sides of the same coin – Muslims were slave-traders and slavery was a

Muslim endeavour. Their zeal in pushing back Muslim influence and to fight slavery often inclined them to exaggerate the scope of the slave trade. The more dangerous and aggressive Islam and slave trade appeared in the eyes of their European audiences, the more likely financial and political support for the mission was among the European clergy, the political establishment of Germany, France, Luxemburg, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Austria, where their congregation was most active.²⁶ Hence, White Father reports enormously exaggerated the importance of slavery, while accusing the German administration of downplaying this menace to Christianity and to the poor natives on the ground.²⁷ Bishop Hirth even warned of Rwanda's imminent depopulation, caused by slave trade.²⁸ Hirth's claims about tens of thousands of slaves brought every month from Rwanda to Tanganyika led to a major clash between the German administration and the mission and inclined the colonial department at the German Foreign Office in Berlin to launch an inquiry among the different German outposts in Western Tanganyika, Rwanda, and Urundi. The results were meagre: slave trade took place in some places, but it was far below the scope of what happened in neighbouring regions and far below Hirth's claims.²⁹ In 1903, the *Gouvernement* in Daressalam conducted a confidential inquiry among the district offices and outposts to establish the scope of the slave trade in the colony. It did not reveal information about organized slave trade, only "individual cases". But even among those, "no Rwandan cases could be discovered."³⁰ The German records from the region and later analyses of the slave trade in East and Central Africa agree on this aspect: slave trade was omnipresent, but not in Rwanda.³¹

26 Chrétien, Jean-Pierre: "La question de la traite au Burundi et au Rwanda au début de la colonisation allemande (1890–1906)." In: Médard, Henri et al. (eds): *Traites et Esclavages en Afrique Orientale et dans l'Océan Indien*. Paris: Éditions Karthala 2013, 339–340.

27 Kagabo, José Hamim: *L'Islam et les 'Swahili' au Rwanda*. Paris: Éditions de l'école des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales 1988, 22–23.

28 Kagabo, *L'Islam*, 23.

29 Chrétien, *la question de la traite*, 342–350.

30 National Archives of Tanzania (further: NAT), G 61/19 1902–1906, "weiße Väter", confidential report from 20.2.1903.

31 Marissal, Jacques: "Le Commerce zanzibarite dans l'Afrique des Grands Lacs au XIXe siècle." *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 65, n°239, 2e trimestre 1978, 212–235; Kagabo, *L'Islam*, 23.

The above-mentioned German report mentions it with only one sentence: “slave trade plays no role in Rwanda.”³²

Of course, the Germans had every reason to downplay the scope of slave trade, because it could discredit their colonial endeavours in the eyes of the German, and even more the French, Belgian and British publics. The legal German colonial claims to Tanganyika, Rwanda and Urundi depended on Germany’s exercising “effective control” over the entire territory and not only over the coastline and the harbours. Therefore, proof of large-scale slave trade would either amount to Germany tolerating or even supporting it (this is what Hirth accused Germany of), or suggest Germany did not control the area and therefore did not deserve to colonize it. However, the German officers not only reported very low figures about the trade to outsiders and for the use of the public, they also did so in their internal communication, which is a strong indication of these numbers’ reliability. But it should be clear: neither the mission nor the *Gouvernement* in Daressalam were able to make explicit and holistic findings about the matter. At the time of the controversy, Rwanda was administered from Urundi, Germany had only two small military outposts in Rwanda, and the civil *Residentur* in Kigali had not yet been established. The mission had more stations in Rwanda, but the missionaries had just arrived and did not speak Kinyarwanda, and just like the Germans they relied on a few translators who could communicate with those Rwandans who also knew Swahili. Neither side could claim to possess knowledge of the territory, which would have been necessary to establish the scope of slave trade with certainty. Slavery and slave trade did exist and had existed in Rwanda, though. That shows, among others, from a license thesis which a Rwandan student defended in 1983 on the Ruhengeri campus of the National University of Rwanda. It contained oral testimonies from people who remembered slave markets and an overview over Kinyarwanda words pertaining to slave trade notions. The latter, however, does not tell us much about when these notions came into being and how their meaning shifted over time. All we learn from them is that at the time the researcher collected these notions, they were commonly understood as being related to slave trade.³³

32 Archives Africaines, Bruxelles (further: AA), Records from the German Foreign Office, stored in the African Archive of the Belgian Foreign Office in Bruxelles, Akten des Kaiserlichen Gouvernement von Deutsch-Ostafrika betreffend Jahresbericht 1903–1913, Ruanda vol. XVIII–XII nr I A 8, rapport annuel 1909.

33 Mujawimana, Eugénie: *Le commerce des esclaves au Rwanda*. Mémoire présenté en vue de l’obtention du grade de Licencié en Histoire-Géographie et Histoire, Ruhengeri,

There are yet other reasons for the political and scholarly controversy then and now concerning the existence of slavery in Rwanda, namely misunderstandings and misconceptions about habits and customs, which, from an outside perspective, seemed to confirm the existence of slavery in Rwanda. First, there was the institution of lending children to wealthier families in times of hardship, starvation and bad harvests. In such a case, a family threatened by starvation would give one or several children to a wealthier family, where the offspring would receive food and the giver-family payment in kind, while the respective children had to work for the receiving family. The custom created a system of food-redistribution and risk-sharing, helped to limit inequality and prevented the community from weakening in times of crises. When the crisis was over or the child achieved sexual maturity, it would be returned to its original family. Europeans sometimes saw this as a form of intra-Rwandan slavery, but it was quite the opposite. While slave trade weakened the community, depriving it of workforce and reducing its demographic growth, pawn-sharing, as Alison Des Forges called it, enabled the community to share risk, reduce the impact of a crisis and facilitate the survival of its poorer members.³⁴ The lender children did not become members of the receiving family, and the givers would later enjoy all the benefits from hereditary rights, reproduction, and the usual transfers connected to their offspring's marriage. In times of severe famine, when there were too many potential givers and not enough families ready to welcome foreign children, or when members of a lineage got into trouble outside their kin's territory, children and women also were sold to other families for good. As Jean-Pierre Chrétien has argued, a higher number of famines, cattle diseases, and natural catastrophes (as was the case at the end of the nineteenth century) was likely to increase the supply side of the slave trade, with families being forced to sell weaker members, such as children and women to slave traders rather than lending them to wealthier kin.³⁵ During this period, Rwabugiri's numerous invasions of neighbouring territories were also likely to increase the migration of other ethnic groups' members to Rwanda, where they were held as house slaves. However, it is problematic to compare the destiny of house slaves to the one slaves had to endure under the rule of international slave traders. They usually stayed in one place, were treated relatively well, they were not allowed to leave,

Université Nationale du Rwanda, Faculté des Lettres; June 1983 in: Rwanda Archives and Library Services Authority (further RALSA), Kigali.

34 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 136.

35 Chrétien, *La question de la traite*, 352.

and they could enter their owner's *inzu* through marriage. Eugénie Mujawimana cites the oral testimony of a witness: the son of the owner had married a female slave, whom his father had acquired before from a trader.³⁶

Also, the pawn-lending scheme sometimes turned out to be a one-way street. Czekanowski reported on such cases in Bugoye and among northern *abatutsi*, who, according to him, held women in slave-like conditions, who had been sold to their owners for food when they had been small children. These pawns apparently had never returned to their families of origin.³⁷ Nevertheless, Czekanowski did not witness any cases of mistreatment of such (internal) slaves, and nor did he see these famine slaves being sold to slave traders. In internal Rwandan terms, he wrote, "a slave is a person without any alliances". Such a person needed to find work to earn food and was forced to pander to his boss' whims. However, this was no master-slave relation, because the weaker part of such a relationship could switch masters. Powerful leaders used to increase their leverage over competing lineages by welcoming such outlaws and by giving them land. Then they would become loyal followers, help their new master raid neighbouring clans, and they would pay taxes. The phenomena of pawn-lending and famine slaves overlapped with slave trade in some areas and specific circumstances, for example in the Congolese and Ugandan borderland, where foreigners sometimes became slaves in Rwandan households. Their situation was much more vulnerable than that of the internal and domestic slaves in Rwanda, for whom the slave label was not entirely appropriate.³⁸ Close to the few places where slave traders recruited slaves to sell them abroad, it could also happen in times of starvation that families sold children (and women) not only to wealthier kin, but also to foreign traders in exchange for food.³⁹

The prejudices and stereotypes concerning slavery, which emerged during German rule, were not only problematic because of their very content and the misleading connotations the issue could have in Europe, where the public was unaware of the complicated situation on the ground. The main problem consisted in the White Fathers almost perfect monopoly of knowledge production

36 Mujawimana, *Le commerce des esclaves au Rwanda*, RALSA [no page number].

37 BUW, Diary of Jan Czekanowski in the Manuscript Department of The University of Warsaw Library (BUW), Jan Czekanowski collection: D.I.1 Dziennik wyprawy ekspedycji antropologiczno-etnologicznej do Afryki środkowej w l. 1907–1909, vol. IV, 344–350.

38 Galabert, Jean Luc: *Les enfants d'Imana, histoire sociale et culturelle du Rwanda ancien*, St. Jean: Éditions Izuba, 472–476.

39 Kagabo, *L'Islam*, 22–26.

about Rwanda. Due to their larger presence and their penetration of the country, they became intermediaries and translators first for the Germans, then for the Belgians. They lost their monopoly only under Belgian rule, when the members of the Mecklenburg expedition started to publish their findings and the Belgian government had developed its own research infrastructure. Belgian colonialism was – after King Leopold II had ceded The Congo Free State to Belgium in 1908 – almost from the beginning based on a scientific approach. Following the Belgian army and the Belgian administration in Rwanda and Urundi, Belgian anthropologists, ethnologist, historians, and sociologists arrived.⁴⁰ Taking advantage of their superior financial and political position compared with their Rwandan collaborators, they established scientific outposts of Belgian institutions, handed out scholarships and positions. This way the brightest of the White Fathers' students and pupils started to produce and analyze scientific knowledge, whose aim it was to make colonization more effective, Belgian rule firmer, and to prevent violence in Rwanda. The new development deprived the White Fathers of their grip over scientific knowledge production, but it did not render the field more pluralistic. White Fathers remained important influencers, advisors and gate-keepers for the administration, even when civil administrators began writing books about Rwandans' habits and customs⁴¹ and researchers from Belgium rushed into Kigali, Butare, or Gisenyi. They financed their research and published their findings mostly in the institutional framework of the *Institut Royal des Sciences d'Outre Mer*, founded in 1928 in Leopoldville (Congo) and the *Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale*, founded 1947 in the same Congolese city. The former became an *Académie* in 1954. The new statute simplified acquiring funds and doing research and facilitated the new academy's expansion. Apart from these two institutions, today's Africa Museum – which Leopold had founded in 1897 and which concentrated its activities on the Congo – also widened its focus to include collections, research and publications

40 A mere visit to the Africa-Museum in Tervuren shows that many more biologists, geologists and geographers than anthropologists and historians must have come, but I limit my description here to those who did research and wrote about this book's topics.

41 Bourgeois, René: *Banyarwanda et Barundi: l'évolution du contrat de bail à cheptel au Ruanda-Urundi*. Leopoldville: Académie royale des sciences coloniales 1958; Bourgeois, René: *Banvarwanda et Barundi: La Coutume*. Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge 1954; Bourgeois, René. *Banyarwanda et Barundi: Ethnographie*. Brussels: Académie royale des Science coloniales 1956.

about Rwanda and Urundi.⁴² But by then, the slavery topic had lost a lot of its salience. After Belgium obtained the League of Nations' mandate to rule over Rwanda and Urundi, no one could doubt it controlled the territory. After the wave of Tutsi conversions to Catholicism during the 1920s, Europeans ceased to see Islam as a danger to Rwanda, to Rwandans and to European rule. Instead, a new trope emerged, also connected to slavery. It did no longer link slavery to Islam, but instead to the relation between Tutsi and Hutu.

This tendency had its roots under German rule, but it had been more popular among the missions than among the German administration and the military. It was closely linked to popularity of the Hamitic myth. This racist European concept had inclined the Belgians to assume the Tutsis' cultural superiority over the Hutu (the so-called Bantu population) and to base the governance of their indirect rule on the Tutsi. Under German rule, the Tutsi notables were rather seen as the Rwandan counterparts of an exploitive aristocracy and the Hutu as their bondsmen, peasants that still awaited their personal freedom. It was, to some extent, the repercussion of painting Rwanda as an allegedly "feudal" society with an "absolute and centralized monarchy". It was something the White Father leadership wanted to see as the rock, on which it could build its wished-for Catholic African kingdom, but on the other side, it included elements, which looked outdated, atavistic and primitive: Yes, there was a centralized kingdom one could convert, but yes, it also included nobles exploiting their peasants. In addition, it was this alleged exploitation, which enabled the nobles to prevent their underlings from coming to the missions.⁴³

Under Belgian rule, the White Fathers' and the Belgian administration's interests converged much more than had been the case under German rule and the missionaries became advisers and even co-decision makers of the Belgian administrators and the Resident. This became extremely transparent when the

42 It changed its name several times, first under Leopold II from the Palais des Colonies to Palais d'Afrique, then to Musée du Congo (before 1908) and Musée du Congo belge (after 1908) and finally to Musée de l'Afrique Centrale (after the independence of the Congo, Rwanda and Urundi). It had a scientific angle from its inception.

43 Hirth's radical reform program for Rwanda, which included the imposition of individual land tenure and taxes (to make the peasants independent from their chiefs and facilitate their conversion) can be found in: NAT G9 / 19 "Weiße Väter" 1902–1908. Betreffend Wünsche der Weißen Väter laut Schreiben des Bischofs Hirth d.d. Marienburg 15 November 1903 IX. 5214 and Auszug aus einem Schreiben des Bischofs Hirth d.d. Marienburg 15.XI.03 IX 5214 and Betreffend die historische Entwicklung der Schulschamben in Bukoba (10. Juli 1904 Mombasa).

Belgians decided to get rid of Musinga as the king. Léon-Paul Classe, one of the first missionaries in Rwanda, founder of Nyundo and the first Rwandan bishop had protected Musinga for a long time. At the end of the 1920s, he joined the growing ranks of Musinga's antagonists and participated in a smear campaign against the Rwandan monarch. To convince the League of Nations, other colonial powers, Belgian public opinion, and the Belgian government about the need to oust Musinga, the administration and the White Fathers set a paper mill in motion which produced pamphlets, affidavits, reports, and even simple rumours about the *umwani*. They turned everything they had tolerated, accepted, ignored, or even stimulated over the years into counts of an indictment against Musinga. Many of the accusations revealed more about their authors' prejudice and stereotypes than about the King. The Belgian administrators accused Musinga of indifference and passivity regarding the past famines, depicting him as a head of government rather than the traditional authority he was. At the beginning of their rule, they had regarded the *abatutsi* as allies and as the natural rulers of the country. By the end of the 1920s, they saw them as racially distinct oppressors of slave-like Hutu and accused Musinga of opposing the abolition of slavery.⁴⁴ The argument was potentially salient on the international stage, because the Congo Act and the League of Nations mandate obliged the Belgians to abolish slavery. Naturally, Musinga was superstitious (he was actually critical of cattle vaccinations), stuck to ancient beliefs and customs and had maintained homosexual relationships at the court, something that was not unusual and generally accepted among the notables. However, these habits were convenient to pillory him in Belgium and in the international public. In 1931, stunned readers of a colonial journal in Belgium even learned that Musinga had become a liability because he used to sexually abuse children.⁴⁵ By the end of 1931, the governor and the colonial ministry in Brussels had given their consent to remove Musinga and replace him with one of his sons, Rudahigwa. While the decision to remove Musinga had taken shape inside the colonial bureaucracy, the choice for Rudahigwa rather than Rwigemera was Classe's, who was also responsible for the negotiations with Rudahigwa once his father's removal was a done deal. Rudahigwa was part and parcel of the conspiracy, he met the governor in Bujumbura and obtained his approval a week before his father learned about his dismissal. To

44 AA, RWA 1 (5), report of resident Coubeau, 6.8.1931, 12.

45 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 219, Classe, Léon-Paul: "Un triste Sire. Il faut débarrasser Ruanda de Musinga". *L'essor colonial et maritime* n. 494, 495 (21. and 25.12.1930).

add insult to injury, the administration not only sent Musinga into banishment on a remote peninsula, but also threatened him with deportation to Congo if he did not comply with the new rules the Belgians imposed on him: he was neither allowed to receive gifts nor the traditional salute reserved for kings.⁴⁶ He spent the time until his death under a kind of house arrest.

Under German rule, the missionaries had managed to make the issue of slavery an argument in their struggle with the German administration over the treatment of Muslims and Islam and in their fund-raising efforts in Europe. Although slave trade of the kind, international law had banned at that time was almost absent from Rwanda, the conflict created the opposite impression. Under Belgian rule, the meaning of the argument shifted. Although the Swahili population of Rwanda (mostly in Kigali and other bigger towns with markets) increased, slavery became associated with the Tutsi-Hutu relationship.

All this was a game of association, a narrative, which did not have much to do with the reality on the ground. At the end of the 1950s, when Hutu nationalists started to roam the hills of rural Rwanda to garner the support of the peasantry for their struggle against the monarchy and for more access to political power, most of the elements of Hutu dependency on Tutsi landowners and cattle-lenders had already been abolished. All the discriminating traditional burdens on the Hutu population, *uburetwa*, *ubuhake* had been abolished, and Hutu and Tutsi in the countryside only marginally differed in household income. According to a survey from the mid-1950s, the income of a rural Tutsi household was less than five percent above the income of a rural Hutu household.⁴⁷ In 1954, 43.3 percent of all cattle in Rwanda was in the hands of Hutu, while Tutsi households held 49.5 percent.⁴⁸ After the consultative local elections of 1956, Hutu had massively increased their share in the councils on the chief and sub-chief level. Both groups now had collective agency, a large web of (mostly Catholic) organizations, a high degree of mass mobilization, access to the press, and the possibility to litigate and lobby at the UN. In other words: the Hutu movement did not aspire to power because the Hutu were discriminated against so strongly – so poor and oppressed, as their leaders used to say – but because of their relative strength in Rwandan

46 AA RWA 4 (10), Report of the *résident adjoint* Simon to the governor, 9.8.1932.

47 Leurquin, Philippe: *Le niveau de vie des populations rurales du Ruanda-Urundi*. Louvain: Nauwelaerts 1960, 250; Leurquin's survey results can also be found in Linden, Ian: *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda*. Paris: Karthala 1999, 296.

48 Adamantidis, D.: *Monographie pastorale du Ruanda-Urundi*. Bruxelles: Direction de l'administration des forêts et de l'élevage 1956, 30, 64–65.

society, which was not only numerical, but also economic and cultural. In the battle for power, these facts and numbers did not play any role. Instead, *ubuhake* and *uburetwa* (and its colonial successor, *akazi*) became the main symbols with which the “Tutsi oligarchy” had oppressed its “Hutu slaves” in Rwanda, the “feudal country”, ruled by a “foreign elite of invaders”. And the more the political conflict escalated, the more the king and the monarchy appeared as Tutsi institutions and a threat to the collective emancipation of the Hutu. Later, when the king had already gone into exile, Hutu activists would claim the same monarchy, which had abolished the alleged serfdom-like taxes and duties, would reinstate them if the king came back one day.

The reason is simple, why the serfdom and slavery tropes re-emerged on the political agenda while slavery and serfdom and almost everything that could reasonably be associated with them had vanished. In the anticolonial struggle on the international stage, for the anti-colonial audiences in the Soviet block and the non-aligned countries in the UN, the slavery issue was still very salient. Slavery was closely associated with colonialism, it formed the background of the condemnation of South African apartheid and the treatment of the African-American population in the US. For the nascent Hutu movement in its struggle with the monarchy and UNAR, the slavery topic was a dreamed of argument by which the Hutu movement could obfuscate its alliance with Belgium: the Tutsi and their monarchy were the real oppressors in Rwanda, not the Belgians. At that stage, even the Hamitic myth, once a vehicle to justify Tutsi rule over Hutu then became a propaganda weapon in the hands of the Hutu nationalist movement. The Hutu were the oppressed majority, because the Tutsi had invaded the country in the past and had since then held the Hutu in serfdom.

In the struggle over independence, the monarchists fought for a UN-solution which would first give them independence and then require them to hold elections. Under such conditions, the Tutsi-dominated administration would steer the election process, supported by an intact monarchy. The Hutu wanted elections first, counting on Belgian support against the monarchy. The Hutu movement's interest overlapped with the Belgian interest to keep a foot in the Rwandan door after independence. This, however, created a credibility problem for the Hutu activists at the UN. On the domestic stage, they acted prudently, pretending to be moderate, conciliatory, pro-Belgian and pro-European, or, as Belgian officials would say “not xenophobic”, but in New York, they invoked the radical anti-colonial discourse of the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) mainstream. There was a way of reconciling both discourses. Since the Hutu leadership needed the Belgians as a dam against the old Tutsi elites, it had to be cautious when criticizing Belgian colonial rule. But it could resort to a rhetoric which would show

the Hutu movement in an anti-colonial aura without falling behind the monarchists' opposition to colonialism. The Hutu leaders lambasted European and domestic colonialism, reviving the old equation between Tutsi dominance and serfdom and resurrecting the old myth which once had served the *abanyiginya* to legitimize their claim to power: Tutsi were foreigners who had invaded the country and pushed the Hutu into slavery, just like the European colonialists had done. In a famous appeal to the UNGA members, the "Democratic Republican Movement" (the institutional predecessor of Parmehutu)⁴⁹ declared that "the first colonialism in Rwanda was feudality of a colonialist character: the Hutu populations, 85 percent of the country, were subjugated by the Tutsi to an inhumane feudal-colonial regime. The Tutsi colonizers of an Ethiopian-like race, represent hardly 14 percent of the population."⁵⁰ The appeal presented the king as the one at the helm of this colonial pyramid and urged the UNGA members "to tell the Tutsi in Dar to continue their journey to their fathers in Abyssinia." In 1960, when the appeal was published, many of the leading monarchists had fled from the violence in Rwanda to Dar es-Salam. Mentioning Abyssinia was a clear reference to the Hamitic myth's claim about the Tutsi as invaders from Egypt. The reference to the Hamitic myth, to republicanism and majoritarian democracy was a reaction to the rabid anti-colonialism of the monarchists. Invoking the Hamitic myth, writing and speaking about races 15 years after the end of World War II and suggesting to send the "Hamites" back to where they allegedly had come from sounds like preparation for the genocide of 1994 – and many authors who wrote about it after 1994 also treated it this way.

An ever-salient fight against non-existent slavery

The independent republic after 1961 gradually developed first into a Hutu nation state, in which the Tutsi transformed from a former ruling elite into an oppressed ethnic minority and then into a one-party autocracy. The constitutional order reinforced and froze the monopoly of the ruling party, whoever wanted to change the government had to resort to violence. With the Tutsi either reduced

49 The Mouvement Démocratique Républicain, MDR, was created in 1957 and two years later transformed into Parmehutu, the Hutu-dominated *Mouvement Démocratique Rwandais – Parti du Mouvement et de l'Émancipation Hutu* that later won the parliamentary elections and became the backbone of the one-party dictatorship of the First Republic.

50 "Appel pathétique du Ruanda," quoted according to Lugan, *Histoire du Ruanda*, 405. The original word in French was "ethiopoïde".

to a minority deprived of political influence access to power or scattered across neighbouring countries as refugees, change could only come from inside the Hutu establishment. When the split emerged, it was a regional rather than an ethnic one and it brought the slavery-issue back on the agenda.

In the north and north-east as well as in the peripheral territories, which had come under Nyanza's rule only during the 1920s, the *abakingi* system and *abatutsi* rule had been transient and precarious and therefore much less widespread than the collective, lineage-based *ubukonde* system. *Ubugake* had been abolished, but *ubukonde* was still there – for the southern and central Hutu, whose ancestors had lived under *abanyabiginya* rule, it was unimaginable not to abolish a system so similar to serfdom. Of course, neither *ubukonde* nor *ubuhake* had been slavery, they both were systems with mutual (though asymmetric) obligations and rights, and the patrons could never sell their clients to other patrons or itinerant slave traders. But the Hutu movement fell victim to its own demagoguery. In addition, one can assume that *umukonde* patrons could derive benefits from the system, which were unavailable to Hutu landowners in central and southern Rwanda. But the conflict between those who wanted to preserve *ubukonde* and those who wanted to abolish it was never solved by legislation. The northerners' opposition managed to block every attempt to abolish it – in parliament as well as within the government, whose ministry of agriculture buried a bill to abolish *umukonde*.⁵¹

This happened despite the southern and central Hutus' leverage over the party and, indirectly, over parliament. Kayibanda came from Tara, a small town south of Kigali, his constituency was central Rwanda and he had managed to push many of his followers into the party apparatus. Almost all executive secretaries of the party, responsible for the everyday management of the party's top, came from Gitarama, as did one third of the government. But in the army, Hutu from the north dominated, turning the army into the perfect vehicle for contestation. Kayibanda's supporters could contain protest in parliament, in the government and in the party – but their influence in the army was limited.

The straw that broke the camel's neck was external, not domestic. In early 1972, the Burundian army, together with police forces and militias, quelled an

51 Reyntjens, *Droits et pouvoir*, 487–495, for the *ubukonde* and *ubuhake* systems, see also: Maquet, Jacques: 'La tenure des terres dans l'Etat rwanda traditionnel', *Cahiers d'études africaines* 28, vol. VII, 4^e cahier, 967, 624–636; Maquet, Jacques J., and Nzigiziki, Saverio: "Les droits fonciers dans la Rwanda ancien." *Zaire: revue congolaise* 11.4, 1957, 339–359.

uprising of Burundian Hutu, killing the unprecedented number of between 100,000 and 200,000 people, driving tens of thousands across the border with Rwanda.⁵² Together with the rising discontent about Kayibanda's rule in the party and the party leadership's patronage among the population, these events provided a perfect collective scape-goat. Excluding the *Tutsi de l'intérieur* from public administration had driven them into education and business. Especially in the schools, the National University, and the seminars, Tutsi held a disproportionately big share of the positions. It remains obscure whether Kayibanda intended to use the rising fear and irritation about the Burundian Tutsi and the disproportions in the public sector, but when protest erupted, he jumped at the chance. The party leadership encouraged pupils' protests, including the formation of cleansing committees (*comités du salut public*) and the drafting of black lists of Tutsi pupils and teachers who should be evicted from their institutions. The movement transformed into a general xenophobic campaign, whose edge was directed not only against Tutsi and northern Hutu, but also against Swahili, Asians, whites, and Belgians. Its apologists demanded not only the education sector to be cleansed from Tutsi, but also private businesses and even foreign embassies. More and more schools had to close or cancel lessons because of the lack of (Tutsi) personnel.⁵³

Soon, the move – whose purpose was most probably to steer public outrage and discontent against the Tutsi and away from Kayibanda and the party leadership – spun out of control. Not only Tutsi were threatened and their huts burnt down, the same happened to prominent ruling politicians. Violence spilled over into Hutu-Hutu violence on a class rather than a race basis. Several hundred people died, mostly Tutsi, before the government intervened. Kayibanda started to cleanse the government and the army from people he suspected of conspiring against him and prepared a new constitution, which would have allowed him to stay in power for another term.

Two days after Independence Day, the crisis was over. Kayibanda had tried to fire Juvenal Habyarimana, secretary of state and chief of the general staff of the National Guard. But Habyarimana disarmed an officer Kayibanda had with him and then went to the general staff headquarter and launched a coup. The next day, Rwandans learned from the radio that the highly esteemed but disoriented

52 Chrétien; Jean-Pierre and Kabanda, Marcel: *Rwanda, racisme et génocide: L'idéologie hamitique*. Paris: Belin 2016, 296–298.

53 Archives Diplomatiques (Brussels, Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 18888/II/1, Nota: Onlusten in Rwanda.

president of the country had been fired and replaced by a committee for peace and unity. Parliament and government were suspended, together with large parts of the constitution. Leading members of the southern faction were put under house arrest, others sent to prison, where some of them died from mistreatment.

The main stone of contention between the Southern and Northern faction inside the Hutu political establishment was never solved through legislation. Under the conditions of donor-driven land reform, bottom-up pressure in favor of individual, rather than collective land rights the issue is no longer important, at least not under the 2003 constitution with its safeguards for individual property. Paradoxically, the slavery-trope remained present even during the 1990s: it reverberated in gossip and Hutu propaganda, it was part of the government's propaganda against the RPF, which tried to put the party on the same footing as the monarchy, colonialism and UNAR, claiming, a return of "the Tutsi" from Uganda would trigger a restauration of the monarchy and its most-hated feature, forced labour, *uburetwa*, *akazi* or in other words: slavery.

And here, history came full circle.

During the Habyarimana years, the Catholic clergy was very closely associated with the Habyarimana regime (the president himself was a devout Catholic with a chapel in his palace) and the leadership of the ruling party. Just as the Swiss archbishop of Rwanda, André Perraudin had painted UNAR as a communist, monarchist, conservative force that would re-instate slavery if admitted back from the refugee camps, the Church hierarchy under Habyarimana labelled the RPF attack in a 1991 letter to their French counterparts as an assault by "a group of feudal monarchists who are determined to re-install a regime rejected by 80 percent of the population." The country "is under attack from refugees and Ugandan soldiers", they claimed.⁵⁴ Regime propaganda exploited the association between the RPF and the monarchy to the utmost, but some elder people might have believed it simply because they personally remembered the late monarchy and the early UNAR years. The Catholic Church fell into its own propaganda trap. The bishops had warned against communism, associating UNAR's anti-colonialism with Soviet support for anti-Western emancipation movements in Africa and Latin America. At the end, they had started to believe their own propaganda and forgot about the evident contradiction in their imagination about the political Tutsi movement in exile: could it really, three years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, be communist, monarchist, soviet-inspired, feudal and

54 Gatwa, Tharcisse: *Rwanda. Églises: victimes ou coupables? Les églises et l'idéologie ethnique au Rwanda 1990-1994*, Yaoundé, Lomé: Editions Clé, Editions Haho 2001, 210.

pro-slavery at the same time? The strange mixture of Hamitic myth elements, the *abanyiginya* mythology turned upside-down and references to slavery have characterized much of the discourse in the refugee camps and the Hutu diaspora across the world, bolstered by priests and missionaries, who followed their Hutu flock into exile after 1994.

German colonial rule over Rwanda from today's perspective

In Germany, the genocide and compensation claims concerning the Herero and Nama in former German South West-Africa dominate the debate about colonialism. Rwanda does not play any major role there. Post-colonial initiatives and anti-colonial movements usually rely their claims on German colonial rule in what is now Cameroon, Togo, Tanzania and Namibia.

In Rwanda, the dominant narrative about the link between colonial history and the genocide is the following: Before colonialism, all three groups, Hutu, Tutsi, Twa lived in harmony together. Then came the colonizers and divided them into Tutsi, Hutu and Twa to facilitate their exploitation and laying the foundation stone for the genocide against the Tutsi. That is the essence of the today's Rwandan narrative about the past. It equates Rwanda with the *abanyiginya* tradition and colonialism with Belgium. The Germans are not explicitly exonerated, but they are next to never mentioned directly.

As mentioned above, it is not necessary to exchange the *abanyiginya* lens on the past for a Hutu nationalist perspective to find this narrative problematic. It is enough to regard the conflict between the Northern kingdoms and the royal court as a regional (rather than ethnic, national, racial or cultural) one. This turns the German raids against the North and the suppression of the Northern kingdoms into a typical colonial intervention, which violently supported one conflict party (the one affiliated and loyal to the colonial power) against the other one (conflicted with the colonial center's interests). The same happened in Tanganyika during the Wahehe and the Maji-Maji uprisings, when German troops suppressed one group with the help of another one and in German South West Africa, where Nama and Baster initially assisted the German troops in their fight against the Herero. The fighting in Rwanda was smaller in scale and victims and it took place far away from foreign observers, the press and the public in Germany.

In addition, it was under German rule (though not entirely under German control) when an important shift in the meaning of slavery took place, which associated serfdom and exploitation with Tutsi rule over Hutu rather than with Muslim influence. The shift was driven by misconceptions, mutual stereotyping and misunderstandings among Rwandans and the missionaries, but it soon

played an important role in the conflict between the (protestant-dominated) German administration and the (Catholic) mission. To avoid misunderstandings: according to their own legislation, the Germans could not prevent the White Fathers from converting Rwandans. The German administration was bound by its own rules which forced them to admit religious pluralism, but did not oblige them to protect traditional, autochthonous belief systems. Equaling Tutsi rule (and the monarchy) with slavery contradicted the weak ideological basis of indirect rule and the German alliance with Musinga. It is the more puzzling they did so little to contain this association in the German public. Some of the officers in the governor's office in Daressalam suspected the expansion of the culturally French and Catholic White Father mission to undermine the pillars of their power in Rwanda. This did not happen, after the first revolts against the mission in 1904, it became clear that the missionaries' presence was precarious without the German rifles, while the mission was too weak to challenge the alliance between Musinga and the Germans. Something else happened. During the years until the outbreak of the war, the Germans took control of Rwanda's shores and hills, while the White Fathers took control of the souls and minds of their inhabitants. But ultimately, it was Germany that claimed to control Rwanda and under international law it bore responsibility for what happened there. And it was easier to track and punish slave traders than to track and control the meanders of the meaning of slavery took over time.

Klaus Bachmann

2. Between the King, the Church and the Emperor – Ijwi Island as a Rwandan, German, Belgian and Protestant colony⁵⁵

European histories of Rwanda tend to overestimate the significance of modern Rwanda's boundaries and ignore or marginalize their dynamic changes. Especially in history books about post-colonial Rwanda, Rwanda appears as a country that had existed for a long time within the same borders, even before colonialism. Sometimes, their authors explain the regional cleavage, usually distinguishing between a rebellious (and nationalist) North and a more transnational, transethnic South. This chapter argues for more precision: The North itself was more differentiated than most works on modern Rwandan history claim and so was the South. Not even the assumption about Rwanda as a catholic country is correct: there were protestant enclaves long in some regions long before the *abatutsi* mass conversions to Catholicism during the 1930s under Belgian rule. And there was one territory, which entirely deviates from all popular stereotypes about Rwanda: It was never Catholic, the royal kingdom rather than German or Belgian troops colonized it, it remained protestant and German-influenced even after Belgium had taken over Rwanda from Germany and it ceased to belong to Rwanda already after 1910: Ijwi Island, which today forms part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on which this chapter focusses in particular. It was a Rwandan, German-influenced, protestant island, almost the exact opposite of the French- and Catholicism-influenced Rwanda under German rule.

Gisaka as a protestant enclave

In 1852, Rwabugiri's predecessor Rwogera had invaded Gisaka, a small independent kingdom east of Nduga which was ruled by the *abagesera* clan. Rwogera had allowed a local chief to stay in power in exchange for the Gisaka tambour, the symbol of the kingdom's sovereignty. According to Kagame, the *abagesera*

55 Research for this article was sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN grant no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02497 "A history of Rwanda").

then also obtained the right to propose a king mother for the throne,⁵⁶ while the *abega* lost their traditional right to deliver the king mother.⁵⁷ When Rwabugiri came to power, he replaced Rwogera's representatives in Gisaka by his own appointees and created a residence there, where he stayed for an extended period.⁵⁸ Gisaka had become a part of Rwanda, although there are strong indications about the region keeping its own local customs, habits and traditions. One of them was the self-identification of the *abagesera*. The clan had its initial origin in Bugesera and did not identify itself according to the Hutu / Tutsi dichotomy. One of his most prominent descendants, bishop Aloys Bigirumwani, also an influential Rwandan historian and intellectual, refused to affiliate himself with one of these groups even when the Hutu / Tutsi cleavage had long become an ethnic one and Rwanda's domestic politics had turned very antagonistic.⁵⁹ During the first half of the twentieth century contemporary European observers sometimes classified the *abagesera* as Hutu, sometimes as Tutsi and some even did both within the same book.⁶⁰

During German rule, Gisaka remained under the royal court's influence. The region's status changed after World War II. When the Belgians attacked in April 1916, they outnumbered the Germans by ten to one. On 11 May, the Belgian troops entered Kigali, a week later, they were at Nyanza, and in early June they took Usumbura. From there, they moved towards the railway which connected Lake Tanganyika with Daressalam. On 19 September, the Belgian troops arrived in Tabora.⁶¹ For the British government the occupation of these territories was

56 Kagame, Aexis: *Les organisations socio-familiales de l'ancien Rwanda*. Bruxelles: Institut Royale Colonial Belge 1954, 39.

57 Kimenyi, Jean Berckmas: *De la déconstruction du Rwanda aux massacres des Tutsi en 1959. Témoignage d'un proche collaborateur du roi Mutara III Rudahigwa*, Kigali: NURC 2019, 4, 7, 78.

58 D'Arianoff, Alexandre: *Histoire des Bagesera. Souverains du Gisaka*. Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge 1952, 113–121.

59 Carney, J. J. : *Rwanda before the genocide. Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era*. Oxford University Press 2014, 129–132; Bugabo, Antoni Bushayija: *Musenyeri Aloyizi Bigirumwami. Twambare intware z'urumiru*. Kigali 2014.

60 Sandrart, Georges: *Cours de droit coutumier*. Astrida: Groupe scolaire d'Astrida 1939, 113; Kagame, Alexis: *Inganji Karinga I, Kabgayi* [no publishing house] 1959, 38; Pagès, Albert: *Un royaume hamite au centre de l'Afrique*. Bruxelles: Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer. Classe des sciences morales et politiques 1933, 45, 461.

61 Reyntjens, Filip: *Pouvoir et droit au Rwanda. Droit public et évolution politique, 1916–1973*. Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale 1985, 33–40.

only provisional and subject to the outcome of a peace settlement after the war. It did not want the Belgians to administer the territory they had conquered, but the Belgian government in exile (already residing in London at that time) resorted to *faits accomplis*, dividing the land it held into military residences which mirrored the structure under German rule. During the peace negotiations in Paris, Britain, France and, the US forced Germany to cede all its overseas territories, but ignored Belgian demands for German colonies. It was only under a special bilateral settlement, the Milner-Orts agreement, that Belgium obtained Rwanda and Urundi but without the historical region of Gisaka.⁶² Because of pressure from the court in Nyanza on the Belgians, and the Belgian government's pressure on Britain, these territories returned under Nyanza's jurisdiction in 1924. By then, the British no longer regarded Gisaka as indispensable for their own railway plans. But during these few years, Gisaka had undergone far-going changes.

In 1906, the Congo government had signed the *Convention Scolaire* with the Holy See which gave the Catholic missions a privileged status in Leopold's colony. When Belgium took over Congo in 1908, the convention became an annex to the Colonial Charter and hence remained in force, but because Rwanda and Urundi were not yet legally under Belgium rule, it did not formally apply to Rwanda.⁶³ There, the Congo Act and, after 1919, the peace accords and the League of Nations provisions imposed the same kind of religious pluralism that the Germans had respected: no faith could be discriminated. Traditional belief systems were regarded as superstitious and did not enjoy the right to equal treatment. But the new order opened the door to the protestants. In 1908, the Bielefeld mission arrived and founded mission stations in Zinga, Rukira, Kiridina, Iremera, Lubengera, but was forced to leave them in 1916 because of the Belgian military advance. In 1918, the first Belgian Seventh-day Adventists arrived, taking over several mission stations in central Rwanda and Mulera. In 1921, French Protestants took over Kirinda. Protestantism in Rwanda had been mostly

62 Precisely, Belgium would cede the regions of Kigoma, and Ujiji (sometimes also written Udjiji), the territory of the small Uha and Uswi kingdoms (in Tanganyika), as well as Urundi (without the Bugufi region) and Rwanda, but without Gisaka, to Britain. "Gisaka" became the key term for the Rwandan court's losses, but the swath of land the court lost to British rule was a bit larger than just the historical landscape of Gisaka, it also included parts of Mulera and Buganza. Nsengimana, Innocent: *Le Rwanda et le pouvoir européen (1894–1952). Quelles mutations?* Berne: Peter Lang 2003, 431–433; De Lacger, Louis: *Le Ruanda moderne*. Namur: Grands Lacs 1939, 132.

63 This changed in 1925, when Belgium started applying the convention directly to Rwanda and Urundi.

German and quite nationalist but after 1916 it started to become French and Belgian.⁶⁴ There was one exception to that rule: the English Church Missionary Society (CMS) had managed to get a stronghold in Rwanda by penetrating Gisaka during the period when it was under British rule (1919–1923). In 1916, the first CMS missionaries crossed the border between Uganda and Rwanda and were arrested by the Belgians. It was only after the war, in 1920, that they were allowed to build a hospital and a school in Nyanza. The CMS remained in Gisaka even after the British withdrew⁶⁵, initiating a wave of charismatic Protestantism in East Africa, known as “the East African Revival”. The evangelical movement with its emphasis on individual, internal renewal, with its universalist message which crossed racial barriers, fell on a fertile ground in famine-ridden Gisaka⁶⁶ and spread in a similar way to the *nyabingi* cult a generation earlier, but without the latter’s political edge.⁶⁷ Like in Europe, Protestantism had a national rather than cosmopolitan flavour, it was either British like the CMS or German like the Bethel mission.

For the people of Gisaka, British rule meant the destitution of their traditional chiefs and their replacement by new chiefs appointed by the British authorities and Protestant, rather than White Father missions.⁶⁸ The British accepted cattle transports in the framework of traditional obligations, that is if a cattle owner moved his cattle across the border. Cattle thieves took advantage of the order, aware of the difficulties the British and the Belgians had with communication, cross-border pursuits, and extradition.⁶⁹

64 BA, *Rapport sur l'administration belge des territoires occupés de l'est-africain allemand et spécialement du Ruanda et de l'Urundi*, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies, 1920–21. Bruxelles: M. Hayez, imprimeur de la Chambre des Représentants 1921, 49–51.

65 Kalimba, Jéréd: “L'Eglise anglicane au Rwanda 1922–2012.” In: Gatwa, Tharcisse and Rutinduka, Laurent (eds): *Histoire du christianisme au Rwanda. Des origines à nos jours*. Yaoundé: Editions Yaoundé 2014, 117–120.

66 See Klaus Bachmann’s chapter about the famines in Rwanda in this book.

67 Gehman, Richard. “The East African Revival.” *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 5.1, 1986, 36–55.

68 Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoir*, 203–204.

69 BA, *Rapport sur l'administration belge des territoires occupés de l'est-africain allemand et spécialement du Ruanda et de l'Urundi*, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies, 1920–21. Bruxelles: M. Hayez, imprimeur de la Chambre des Représentants 1921, 13–15.

The British protestant influences in Gisaka soon proved quite uncomfortable for the Belgians. Struggling to get international support for their colonial plans, they were striving to prove their control over the country and to show how beneficial Belgian rule was for Rwandans. The famine that broke out in 1917 was quite counterproductive for that purpose and the news about it wouldn't have probably reached the European public without the reports from John Edward Church, one of the initiators of the East African Revival who had settled in Gisaka and observed the famine as an eyewitness, alarming European public opinion about it.⁷⁰ "One cannot go far in any direction without seeing corpses dying by the roadside", he wrote. Patients crawled to his hospital from the adjacent hills. Press coverage, based on his testimony, put pressure on the Belgian administration, which started to buy food in Urundi and distribute it in Gisaka and the surrounding regions affected by the disaster.⁷¹

A protestant island under Rwandan, German and Belgian rule

The protestants' successes in Gisaka should not obfuscate the fact that the White Fathers had outsmarted their protestant rivals. When the latter were building their first stations, the White Fathers had already established a web of missions in the country, a dense cooperation with the *abatutsi* in the vicinity of their stations, and an institutionalized access to the court. They also had many more pupils and converts and a relatively deep knowledge of the local customs, habits, and the system of governance. Until the outbreak of World War I, the Protestants did not make much progress in the territories under Musinga's rule. The German Pastor, Ernst Johanssen managed to establish a good relationship with Musinga, but that did not much further the former's project.⁷² There was an exception, one territory, where the Protestants were successful. It was situated west of Rwanda proper, populated by Kinyarwanda-speaking cattle herders, and did not host any missionaries before the Protestants arrived there: Ijwi Island. Under Rwabugiri, the island had paid tribute to the Rwandan court, but probably based

70 Church, John Edward: *Quest for the Highest. An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival*. Exeter: Paternoster Press 1981.

71 Newbury, David: "The Rwakayihura Famine of Rwanda 1928–29 in Eastern Rwanda. A nexus of colonial rule." In: Nsabimana, Tharcisse (ed): *L'histoire sociale de l'Afrique de l'Est*. Bujumbura, Paris: Karthala CCB 1991, 269–285.

72 Johanssen personally tried to convert Musinga: Johanssen, Ernst: *Ruanda – kleine Anfänge, große Aufgaben*. Bielefeld: Verlagshandlung der Anstalt Bethel 1915, 170–176.

on a misunderstanding: what Ijwi's ruler regarded as an exchange, Rwabugiri saw as proof of submission to his rule. Before Kabego, successor to Ijwi's first king Mwendanga, came to power, ties between the island's rulers and those of the Rwandan kingdom had been friendly and intense. The families had intermarried and Ijwi kings had easy access to the Rwandan court. Under Kabego, Ijwi ceased to send gifts to Rwanda and two of Mwendanga's sons were killed in Rwanda. Relations soured, and Rwabugiri sent out his army to attack Ijwi twice. The first time, Ijwi managed to repulse Rwabugiri's assault; the second time, the Rwandans were successful. Rwabugiri then had the support of an Ijwi traitor, Nkundiye, a son of one of Kabego's younger wives. Nkundiye had many family links with the Rwandan coastal region of Kinyaga but was rather isolated on the island. Through intrigues and by taking advantage of internal disputes among Kabego's sons, he managed to outmanoeuvre one after the other and offer his assistance to Rwabugiri in the wake of the latter's attack on the island. After the second, successful, attack of Rwabugiri's army, Nkundiye led the Rwandans to Kabego's hiding place on a distant small island in Lake Kivu, where they killed the retired king. Rwanda installed Nkundiye as Ijwi king in the southern part of the island; they left the incumbent ruler of the north, Tabaro, in place, but slightly extended his territory into the south. Under Rwabugiri, Ijwi not only returned to the status of a territory paying tribute to the Rwandan court, but Nkundiye also became Rwabugiri's personal client, following him into his military campaigns. Nkundiye earned a reputation as a fearless, enormously successful warrior, but when his fame threatened to outshine Rwabugiri's, the Rwandan king had him killed at the end of a long military campaign.⁷³ With his attempts to outfight local competitors for power, Nkundiye had opened the island to intrigues and interventions from Rwanda. After Nkundiye's death, another son of Kabego, Mihigo⁷⁴ who had gone into exile during Nkundiye's rule, returned to the island.⁷⁵ Weakened by the conflicts which ravaged Rwanda's political establishment after Rucunshu, the court in Nyanza lost its grip over the Island and Ijwi ceased to

73 According to Newbury, David: *Kings and Clans. Ijwi Island and the Lake Kivu Rift, 1780–1840*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press 1991, 188–190, Nkundiye committed suicide, drowning in Lake Kivu while being pursued by Rwabugiri's soldiers.

74 Mihigo, the *umwani* of Ijwi, appears as Mihigo in Johanssen's and Kabagema's accounts, but as Ndogosa (and Ndogosa Mihigo) in Newbury's books. It is the same person, though.

75 Newbury, David: *The Land Beyond the Mists. Essays on Identity and Authority in Pre-colonial Congo and Rwanda*. Athens: Ohio University Press 2009, 142–160; Newbury, *Kings and Clans*, 189–192.

pay tribute again. Under Mihigo, the relation was more than strained. When the Protestant missionaries arrived on the island, Mihigo welcomed them warmly, gave permission to erect a station, allowed them to proselytize his underlings, but imposed one condition: that they never bring any Rwandans to the island. Under Rwabugiri, the island had seen an influx of Rwandans whom Nkundiye had put into key positions.⁷⁶

For the Protestant missionaries, this situation had the advantage of allowing them to negotiate directly with Nkundiye's successor, Mihigo, and without any interference from Musinga. Beginning from 1909, they started to settle on the island, encouraged by the Germans. But in 1910, these same Germans negotiated a new border settlement with Britain and Belgium, which put Ijwi under Belgian rule and some northern territories which Musinga claimed for himself under British rule. The German government had ceded the island obtaining Belgian security guarantees for the German protestant mission.⁷⁷ The missionaries were nevertheless disappointed when they learnt about the cession. So were the locals and the royal court. Ijwi became Belgian, but the mission retained the right to continue its work there and both the locals and the missionaries kept the right to trade with the German-ruled mainland under Musinga's jurisdiction. The Protestants on Ijwi saw themselves as representatives of Germany and cooperated with the German administration on the eastern shore of Lake Kivu. While the White Fathers had started to support colonial interests only when things got out of hand in the northern territories of the Rwandan mainland, the Protestants on Ijwi did so from the very beginning.⁷⁸ They had their own agenda which overlapped with German interests: first, they wanted to prevent the Germans from giving the Island to the Belgians and collected material about alleged Belgian atrocities on the island and about the antipathy which Mihigo harboured for the Belgians and his sympathy for Germans. Later they sent reports to Gisenyi in which they described the Belgian conduct on the island. These reports contained many allegations of atrocities committed by the Belgian Askari, whom the Protestants accused of arbitrarily confiscating cattle, mistreating the locals and

76 Johanssen, *Ruanda*, 205.

77 Louis, William R.: "The German-Belgian-British Kivu-Mfumbiro-Conference of 1910", *Bulletin des Séances de l'Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre Mer* VII, 6, 1961, 839–858.

78 Léon Classe had sent Rwandan spies during the British-German-Belgian tensions preceding the Brussels agreement to provide the Germans with intelligence about the British and Belgian troops in Uganda and the Belgian Congo. Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, 188–200 (based on records from the Bundesarchiv, further BArch)

deploying them in excessive forced labour. Ultimately, the Belgians arrested one of the reporting missionaries. In the absence of local and Belgian sources about the relations between the missionaries, the local inhabitants and the Belgians on Ijwi, it is impossible to find out whether the missionaries' reports faithfully reflected the events on Ijwi, or whether they were just anti-Belgian propaganda with the aim of bolstering the Protestants' agenda.⁷⁹ When World War I broke out and the German-Belgian hostilities engulfed the western part of Rwanda, the missionaries' loyalties became extremely visible. The White Fathers remained reluctant towards the German war effort and the Germans suspected them of spying for the Belgians⁸⁰, while the Protestants became fervent German nationalists. In their reports and publications, they emphasized how much the local rulers had allegedly deplored the German defeat.⁸¹

The dark side of German rule for the royal court

Many years later, when Rwanda had effectively become a Belgian colony, the *abatutsi* had converted to Catholicism and the court had lost its power, many *abatutsi* and Musinga himself looked back on the German times with nostalgia. They often emphasized the Germans' support for the King, how they had helped him consolidate his power in the north and that they had not meddled much in the system of governance, which they had found upon their arrival. This rosy picture has survived until today and forms the background of Rwanda's efforts to reconstruct and maintain artefacts from German colonial times. Compared to the much fresher experience of Belgian rule, German colonialism appears as relatively modest and tempered. But from the perspective of Rwanda's political establishment before World War I, the results of German politics were a disaster. Due to the German's concession to Britain and Belgium, Rwanda lost large swaths of territory to other European powers, which Rwandan kings

79 The main sources about Ijwi in these times are Johanssen, *Ruanda*, 199–212 and the German records in BArch R.1001.5600. Johanssen was the head of the Protestant mission in Rwanda and one of the missionaries who went to Ijwi. The German colonial administration never had an outpost on Ijwi and administered the territory from Gisenyi, all their information came from the mission. See also Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 261–274 and 281–283.

80 Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 297–299.

81 Röhl, Karl: *Ostafrikas Heldenkampf*. Berlin: Warneck 1918; Röhl, Karl: *Deutsch-Ostafrika verloren*. Denkschrift (from 1917) in BArch R.1001.874. Röhl was one of the Protestant missionaries.

had regarded as their realm and which Rwanda had no chance to reconquer. In Mpororo and the north-eastern territories which the Germans had given to the British, *abatware* were still allowed to pay tribute to Musinga (who, in defiance of the agreement, had kept his royal cow herd there), and the population there was still be able to trade with Rwanda proper and follow Rwandan customs and habits. On Ijwi, Musinga did not lose any income, because the local rulers had long before ceased to pay tribute to Nyanza, but after 1910, the Island was separated by a customs border from the mainland, it became Protestant rather than Catholic, and Belgian rule there was much harsher than the German rule over the mainland. It is doubtful whether Musinga would have been able to retake the territories, to which he and his predecessors had laid claims. Thanks to German rifles, he won a part of the north, lost another one to Britain, and had Rwanda's ties to Ijwi severed for ever.

Assumpta Mugiraneza

3. **The IRIBA Centre & the Young Artists in the City Programme Rwanda: The experience of a *Decolonial Documentation*, on German colonization.**

Introduction

In Rwanda, the 20th century began with an unprecedented event, colonisation, and ended with genocide. This is a fact that forces us to rethink our relationship with history, our way of living in our world, and our duty to transmit it to new generations. As the French historian Georges Bensoussan (2007) wrote in his essay entitled *Europe, une passion génocidaire*:

“To hear the path that leads one part of humanity to forbid the other to inhabit the planet implies confronting our anguish in thinking the unthinkable, which is today described as unspeakable. Because to think is to take the risk of being worried, it is not only a question of ‘getting rid of the known’, but of oneself, so prone are we to denial, whose violence is matched only by the weakness of the argument we put up against our opponent.”

With this statement, the historian essayist invites us, enjoins us, to break the moorings, to get out of our *too obvious* explanations, our *too known* practices, to dare to face the forgotten spaces, left fallow, to look for what we did not want to see, which ends up coming back like a boomerang.

The 20 century, which in Rwanda ended with a genocide conceived in Rwanda by Rwandans against their Rwandan compatriots, soon raised the question of the cultural roots of this evil, in its singularity but also in its universal aspects. From then on, questioning the German colonial past is necessary in more than one way. Germany, the former colonial power of Rwanda, and Germany, the country that saw the birth of the Nazi party, Hitler’s power and the 3 Reich, which led the 2nd World War and the extermination of European Jews... Avoiding the pitfall of thinking that the factors that explain the Rwandan case can be found in the German case, it can only be one of the many avenues to be explored in order to try to understand the architecture of the crime that took place in Rwanda at the end of the 20th century.

Taking historical, geopolitical and cultural distance and relying on traces of the past to think about the ruptures, the cracks that have contributed to the irreparable fracture, this is the choice we have made in creating the Multimedia Archives and Documentation Centre, called IRIBA.

The IRIBA Centre for Multimedia Heritage is an audiovisual archive founded in Rwanda in 2010 by Assumpta Mugiraneza and Anne Aghion, after 10 years of collaboration on the films the latter made on the participatory justice process, the Gacaca courts. They put their experience at the service of a project designed to ensure that the Rwandan population, in all its components, is the main beneficiary. In the founding text, they state “*The IRIBA Centre for Multimedia Heritage, whose name means ‘the source’ in Kinyarwanda, will be a centre for audiovisual archives on a century of history, with free access for all, without exception*”.

At the intersection of the academic and the practical, the Audiovisual Archives Centre has set itself the **mission of** being a place containing audiovisual archives on more than a century of Rwandan history, to make them accessible to all without exception, Rwandans and non-Rwandans alike, in order to allow them to reappropriate their history and to negotiate spaces for restoring intergenerational links.

This mission is based on two intersecting, mutually reinforcing pillars:

- ***To create spaces for the liberation of speech***, because the Rwandan word is the focus of his identity, his art and his relationship with otherness, the way to access his intimacy, his ills and his riches, it is central to his life.
- ***To accompany the process of reappropriation of the past***, therefore, to develop the capacity to exercise a critical eye, to make choices in a complex multilateral universe, the capacity to prevent conflicts in a sustainable and inclusive perspective.

For obvious historical reasons, going to the archives and looking back at the past in Rwanda is an exercise that requires psychosocial support and pedagogy.

The vision of the IRIBA Centre is to contribute to the creation of an inclusive Rwandan society where citizens have free access to their historical and cultural heritage, allowing them to look back with peace, develop a historical perspective and reestablish intergenerational links in order to truly grasp the challenges of the present.

When the Centre was founded in 2010, the desire to return to the past in order to negotiate a different future was reflected in its mission statement: “*Audiovisual archives are an essential part of any country’s cultural and historical heritage. However, in Rwanda, where few people read, and less than a generation after the 1994 genocide, these resources have a crucial role to play for future generations.*”

A peaceful knowledge of their past will be an essential condition for building a future without conflict."

From then on, it was necessary to devote itself to an innovative and crucial field of intervention, on dimensions that remained problematic in Rwanda: audiovisual archives, the liberation of speech, the pedagogy of history and transmission.

Understanding the burden of German colonization in Rwanda (1894–1916)

The field of knowledge on Rwanda has suffered from the major socio-political crises that the country experienced throughout the twentieth century. On the one hand, this is reflected in the relationship that the Rwandan population has with its past, oscillating between denial and exaltation, maintaining an ambiguity that risks holding future generations hostage. On the other hand, this is confirmed by the profound gaps that persist in the view of the foreign observer who, considering himself as *knowing-objectively*, finds it difficult to question his certainties about Africa, and has difficulty in accepting any challenge.

When one wants to look at Rwanda's 20 century, one comes up against breaking points whose impact remains little or not questioned at all, from the Rwandan point of view. Among these breaking points with multiple consequences, the German colonisation, which took place at the very end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th. We remain convinced that *the colonial object* deserves epistemological efforts that all the protagonists must make in order to forge a new cognitive baggage, based on the crossing of knowledge sources and their reading.

Revisiting the German colonial past in Rwanda with the post-modern generation

The term postmemory, coined by Marianne Hirsch, describes the relationship that *the next generation* has with the cultural, collective and personal trauma experienced by those who came before it, and thus concerns experiences that this next generation only 'remembers' through the stories, images and behaviours that it grew up with. But these experiences have been passed on to them in such a deep and emotional way that they *seem to* constitute their own memory... Growing up with the legacy of overwhelming memories, being dominated by narratives that preceded one's own birth or consciousness, runs the risk that the stories of one's own life will themselves be displaced, or even evacuated, by one's

ancestors... These events occurred in the past, but their effects continue in the present.

With this new situation in Rwanda in mind, we started an intergenerational work on the subject of the colonial past. Young people were to take part in the process of developing the research protocol and conducting field surveys etc. (A Berlin-based organisation, SAVVY Contemporary, provided partial support in 2021)

At the end of the nineteenth century, Rwanda was a structurally constituted kingdom, with a geographical and political territory, with well established socio-political identities, values and cultural practices. The small kingdom remained for a long time beyond the reach of the waves of the slave trade and European explorers followed by colonisers. Indeed, it was more than 10 years after the Berlin Conference (1884–85) that Rwanda saw the arrival of political colonisation and its corollary, the istianisation of the newly conquered peoples. Colonisation created an ontological rupture that saw the world before it, at best denied, at worst declared dangerous, a world that had to be broken.

They then entered and established themselves in Rwanda:

- A two-headed and conflictual worldview, antagonistic in nature
- Racial theories and the basis of racial hatred (later ethnic hatred, a new way of looking at things in Africa)
- The agglomerated habitat, the basis of the next urbanisation imposed on Rwanda in its decreed modernisation,

The consequences are:

- The abolition of a complex, holistic and conciliatory way of thinking, forged over a long period of time by a social group that recognises a common destiny,
- The loss or disintegration of anthropological, cultural and identity markers (language, faith, taboos etc.)
- The racialised, segregationist and racist imaginary, erected as a political argument, to an extreme level, of amputated identities, diverted
- The retreat of women, in the new social formula called “civilised”, the place of women has taken a long step backwards, reduced to a pale copy of the European woman of the 18–19 century.
- A “colonised” relationship with the city, its architecture and its uses, a deficit of appropriation that persists a century later.

After the defeat of Germany in World War I^{ère}, Rwanda and its southern neighbour Urundi were under Belgian colonial rule until the early 1960s (1^{er} July 1962.)

The struggle for independence in Rwanda (and Burundi) has been dominated by the new political pseudo-arguments, narratives full of dominations and oppressions between races, racial inequalities, racial delusions implanted in the imaginary, the past will be looked at in factions of guilty and victims, a seriously instrumentalised past.

German colonisation lasted less than 20 years and disappeared in a war of foreigners, whose causes and stakes were unknown to the Rwandans. Belgium then came to complete the colonial action and caused conflicts that were to become more deeply rooted in Rwandan narratives and imagination. The German colonial period is today, at best ignored and at worst, fantasised, as if to better express anti-Belgian resentment.

With this project, we propose to contribute to mitigating this misunderstanding, through a process of documentation and appropriation of decolonisation discourses on this part of history, with young artists in the forefront.

Who are the Young Artists in the City of Rwanda?

In 2012, the IRIBA Centre initiated a programme called *Negotiating a Shared Future*. Some of the young beneficiary artists have distinguished themselves and are working in small solidarity groups of Artistic Creation, based on sound and visual archives. They are following a programme specifically designed for them in 2019: ***Young Artists in the City Rwanda***. They meet in weekly thematic workshops, announced in advance or at their request. Through their creations, they intend to occupy the public space and make their ideas heard, in a responsible, argued and enlightened manner, based on knowledge and ethics. We organise workshops that allow them to sharpen their thinking, to try to take in hand the questions, the challenges of their city Rwanda.

Under the supervision of the academic leader, six young people participated in the research and documentation work, which was intended to be decolonial.

Documenting the traces of German colonisation in Rwanda, putting into a *decolonized* narrative, by Rwandan voices

Two years before the 60th anniversary of Rwanda's independence, we reinforced our interest in the past of Rwandans in general and in the past under German colonisation in particular. We had chosen to inscribe the approach among young people, especially young artists so that talking about the past means looking at the future and integrating it into the new challenges.

The documentation work was carried out by combining audiovisual documentation from Rwanda and by Rwandans (photos, videos, testimonies and stories, songs, names, physical traces), on the period of German colonisation. This was to allow us to better underline the rupture between what these sites were before colonisation and what they would become afterwards, especially in the narratives. Our focus was on two other particular moments in Rwanda, from independence to 1994 and from 1994 to 2020. While we do not dispute the importance of official archives (chancelleries, governments), we wanted to give pride of place to local narratives, so little considered in official narratives, threatened with disappearance.

Prior to the fieldwork, we had increased the number of exchanges on the collusion between Rwandan conceptions of living in the city and colonial conceptions. It was necessary to awaken the senses of young people to the search for traces, for Rwandan memories, to remind them that what cannot be seen is not necessarily absent. To initiate the search for traces other than buildings, roads and other infrastructures that have tended to make people forget the other occupations of the various sites under study.

The approach refuses to be a written questionnaire, drawn up far from local realities. We go around, we meet people, we exchange, we get people to talk at the meeting places, we try to stimulate exchanges by choosing old names or by singing something known about the region and observe the way in which the interlocutors leave the habits of “modern knowledge” to evoke their memories, their skills on their area, their questions, to cross the Rwandan intimacy and modesty with the public and the panegyric celebration of which Rwandan people are capable when we know how to create a certain trust.

For example, in the Kinyaga and starting with Nyamasheke and its surroundings, the academic leader led the research team to look at a site that bears many historical traces of the Rwandan royal power (just before the arrival of the Germans) and see what we have lost the habit of seeing, to be interested in it, to question it on the eve of independence, and today.

Three sites or areas of investigation

While German colonisation did not spare any territory in Rwanda, there are three sites that counted politically and militarily, which we visited with the young people and the concern to see what is made visible and what is made invisible.

- **The post of Gisenyi**, in the North West of Rwanda on the border with Congo-Belgium, which had a strategic and tragic importance in the German occupation.

- **The post of Shangi or Cyangugu**, in the south-west of Rwanda on the border with Burundi (another country colonised at the same time), which was of political and strategic importance.
- **The post of Kigali**, chosen by Richard Kandt as the official capital of the colony (1904), is in the centre of the country, and this is the example we choose to develop.

Indeed, a group of young people from the IRIBA Centre had started this quest in a sub-programme of Jeunes Artistes dans la Cité Rwanda called “*Ma ville est centenaire*” (*My city is a century old*), which focused on the traces of the German passage in Kigali. This work provided a beneficial working context for the decolonial documentation project. The team had been introduced to this sideways glance, a glance that attempts to deconstruct the biased certainties of colonialism, a decolonial glance.

What was the role of Kigali-Nyarugenge, in the centre of Rwanda, and how was it occupied before Richard Kandt came to establish a single capital for the entire colonised territory of Rwanda? What do the Rwandan traces that have been collected reveal? What traces remain and how can they be read in dialogue with colonial decisions?

In a Rwanda where everything changes very quickly, almost nothing remains from the pre-colonial era, almost nothing visible in the way we look at things since colonisation. Indeed, in this pre-colonial Rwandan universe, everything was inscribed in nature or in the social function, in the Rwandan landscape which was conceived with the people who inhabited it, the traces are oral (songs, names, stories etc.). If the IRIBA Centre group understands this, it is very likely that such work will become a matter of concern for researchers, institutions and donors working on and in Rwanda.

A special note for some symbols of the German colonization, remain visible and well maintained, as buildings that testify to the German colonial presence and domination.

Richard Kandt, the first colonial governor of Rwanda on behalf of Germany, tends to become a legend while no work on deconstructing the colonial narrative and its founding ideology seems to mobilise enough attention from financiers and other decision makers in the field. The colonial residence has recently been turned into a museum, which gives pride of place to the colonial narrative. The Kandt Museum in Kigali is divided into three sections.

- The first half depicts Rwandan life before the colonial period, in various elements (social, economic and political).



Richard Kandt Museum (Richard Kandt House), *Photo Centre IRIBA (June 2021)*

- The second section is intended to give an account of the life of the Rwandan people during the colonial period.
- The third section is devoted to the task of telling the history of the city of Kigali before, during and after the colonial period.

Although a new effort to reduce the “Kandtian-colonial” vision of this museum must be acknowledged, there is still a lot of decolonisation to be done both in the programming and in the contents of the permanent exhibition. The museum regularly hosts German-Rwandan events that timidly allow us to take a look at the past.

This building, which has, in extraordinary proximity, on the hill opposite the Kigali prison (said 1930) has been rehabilitated and houses, in addition to the museum part, the offices of the administration and the national commission of Museums in Rwanda.

In the photo, we even see a golden statue of Richard Kandt, which was added in this effort to rehabilitate the “new style” of statues in Rwanda, a culture without a figurative tradition. It should be noted here too, that this site would require great political, diplomatic and artistic efforts to apply a decolonial approach. The issue does not seem to be on the agenda, and public discussion of it is still far away, at least for the average Rwandan, as revealed by the few interviews we had with the inhabitants of Kigali. On the whole, Kigali is not a subject of knowledge for those who live there, in various categories of the population,

- young people have internalised an extraordinary capacity to “not see the city they live in”, they do not experience it as an object of knowledge.

- Adults who knew Kigali before 1994 know the city better, have landmarks and memories, but most of it is the city decreed by colonisation and so little is pre-colonial.
- The adults who joined Kigali after 1994 were unable to establish any stable knowledge, such as an inability to become attached to this city where they had no roots and where they were unable to establish any for reasons that it would be futile to try to explain without more ambitious, in-depth research.

The city of Kigali does not seem to address the need for intergenerational transmission within families or in knowledge transmission spaces such as schools or cultural activities.

Some observations to share, to deepen...

We wanted to change our point of view, not to start from the Germans in Rwanda to observe what they said about Rwanda, but to dare to look closely at the Rwandan layer that preceded the arrival of the Germans, to better understand what they left to the land they colonised at the very beginning of the 20th century. We are not looking for confrontation for the sake of confrontation, but a kind of dialogue between the two eras to try to understand this past.

Two universes follow one another without complementing each other, confronting each other without dialogue:

- *A universe of words and symbols versus a universe of denial of a pre-existing civilisation, with the mission to “civilise” a savage world.*

The witnesses we met told us about their relationship with the Rwandan past, the memory of parents and grandparents is there. The witnesses tell about the expeditions of King Kigeli Rwabugiri (end of 19^e century) as they have learned from family and social stories. The stories are accompanied by songs, place names and nicknames given to people, anecdotes etc. which contribute to the memories of the time.

- *It is a whole universe that is not referenced, yet a rich universe that emerges from these memories that we rarely have the time to solicit, to value, to share.*

The mechanisms at play are different when the same actors are asked about “official knowledge”, which concerns the civilising mission (colonial, Christianisation and neo-colonial), the renderings seek to rely on material reference points that are not fully mastered (buildings, roads, written documents whose origin is

not known exactly, maps that cannot be read well, etc.), the discourse becomes hollow, schematic, without interest

- *It is a truncated, schematic, repetitive and simple universe that we find, an imprecise universe, rendered with a discourse that shows a lack of ownership by the narrators.*
- *A strategy of presence and distribution of royal power versus a logic of conquest and centralised domination.*

Whether in Kinyaga or in Kigali, we have traced a different relationship of Rwandan power in the way of occupying the different regions that constitute the kingdom of Rwanda in comparison with the colonial power.

- *The Rwandan royal power spread its political, social, economic and other activities over the whole territory, without the need to centralise everything in one or two corners. From the enthronement to the burial of kings, through marriage, everything seems to have this need to cover the whole territory, to spread the presence of power.*

When one takes the trouble to research the Rwandan traces of contemporary history, it requires accepting to distance oneself from the official narratives of modern historians.

It can be seen that pre-colonial Rwanda did not have a single capital but rather capitals each specialised in an important activity that contributed to the development of the kingdom. Even Kigali-Nyarugenge had its function in the life of the pre-colonial Rwandan kingdom. Similarly, Kinyaga was not limited to Shangi (the centre of colonial governance) or Nyamasheke (the centre of a civilising mission through Christianisation), just like all the other regions of Rwanda, from the North to the South, from the East to the West, no region of Rwanda was left out. It can be seen that there is a completely different philosophy in the colonial way of occupying the newly conquered territory.

- *Under German colonisation, a single capital was imposed for the country, Kigali, and Resident General Richard Kandt established his residence there and the beginning of urbanisation and settlement, in the Western style.*
- Shangi and Kisenyi (Gisenyi), will be the other important sites of colonial governance, constituting a triangle of occupation of the conquered territory.

With this work, we wanted to remind people that the history of colonisation can only be understood correctly if we accept to revisit what was there before colonisation, if we refuse to act as if colonial history marks the year zero of the history of colonised countries. This bias is so present in the way we look at Rwanda that

we reproduce this blindness to the roots of our own past, our own history as Rwandans.

Our present research, our work although modest, intended to contribute to the movement to change this bias inherited from colonisation, to adopt an approach of decolonisation of knowledge and practices. The young Rwandans have shown their willingness to learn, their ability to contribute to the necessary work, they have shown their interest in the past and in questioning the colonial past in an approach guided by this thirst for understanding, without resentment or the desire to fight with anyone, they want to reduce the weight of ignorance.

Partial conclusion

Decolonising is not simply a matter of refusing an often truncated dominant point of view, it is a long and progressive process in which it is necessary to

- Find ways to reduce amputations by raising awareness and proposing alternative views,
- To reconcile the points of view, between current considerations strongly anchored by the colonial process and pre-colonial practices that can no longer be abandoned under the pretext of entering modernity.
- To patiently deconstruct, with arguments, the ideologies resulting from colonisation and independence which have not succeeded in undertaking this work of deconstruction,
- Broadening horizons, diversifying and crossing them in a complementary way, asking questions and trying to construct answers to these questions.

The present work, even if finished, would only be a modest contribution, it would be wise to imagine how it could continue and be shared beyond our usual circle.

Translations (Kinyarwanda, French, English, German) would be a good starting point, and artistic and multimedia promotion would also be appropriate. Better still, it would be good for researchers to seize the opportunity to deepen this quest and feed it with their questions, hypotheses and research work.

4. Contemporary conflicts in Cameroon and their roots in colonial boundary delimitation

Famine, plague and war were always at the top of the list at the dawn of the third millennium, writes Harari.⁸² Expectedly, the same three perennial challenges continue to afflict humanity today. War, for instance, seems unavoidable, not only as a result of current local and international politics, but also because of long-standing and often unresolved territorial disputes. In hindsight, we can observe that the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) held to redraw the map of Europe in an attempt to proffer solutions to the problems created by Napoleon Bonaparte, whether advertently or inadvertently, created further territorial wrangles across the European continent.

The 1848 Revolutions, World War I and World War II partly erupted due to the failure of European powers to provide longlasting solutions to the territorial disputes emanating from the Napoleonic wars and even wars that preceded that historical epoch. Another example is the dissolution of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the early 1990s that has revived territorial ambitions as seen today with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These historical circumstances give a clear picture of how territorial disputes continue to be bedrocks for international politics and affect each other mutually.

While Europe had to deal with territorial concerns emerging from its partition and repartitioning throughout history, European powers such as Germany, France and Britain were busy expanding their colonial dominance throughout the world, with Africa being one of the most contentious cases in the early nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. The partition of Africa, endorsed by the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, did not only exclude the Africans from participating but also disregarded the continent's ethnic and cultural diversity contributing to territorial disputes that continue to wreck the continent to this day.

Cameroon is a country wedged between West and Central Africa with an ongoing armed conflict harkening back to its tripartite colonial past. It is located

82 Harari, Yuval Noah: *Homo Deus: A brief history of tomorrow*, London, Penguin Random House, 2016, 1–513.

along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea and has a total surface area of approximately 476,400 square kilometres.⁸³ In terms of territorial boundaries, Nigeria borders Cameroon to the west, Chad to the north and northeast, the Central African Republic (CAR) to the east, the Republic of Congo to the southeast, and Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to the south.⁸⁴

Some scholars trace Cameroon's modern history to the period of German conquest and the annexation of the port of Douala in 1884 – a strip of land along the Wouri estuary that became the basis for further inland expeditions and conquests. The result was the creation of German *Kamerun*⁸⁵, enlarged by territories given by France in exchange for recognition of its protectorate over Morocco.⁸⁶

German colonial administration lasted until the end of the *Kamerun* phase of World War I in 1916, as Germany lost all its territories in Africa as a result of its defeat by the Allied powers. Formally, after World War I, the fate of the German colonies was decided at the Paris Peace Conference that led to the signing of the Versailles Treaty on June 28th, 1919; *Kamerun* – like other German territories in Africa – was transformed into League of Nations mandate and placed under British and French supervision.⁸⁷ Following the failure of an attempted joint administration or condominium, German *Kamerun* was partitioned.⁸⁸ Contrary to the legal status accorded Cameroon by the League of Nations as a Mandate B and later UN Trust territory, Britain and France administered their portions of the territory as part of their colonial empires in Africa.

83 Ngoh, Victor Julius Noah: *Homo Deus The political evolution of Cameroon, 1884–1961*, Portland, Poland State University, 1979, 1–120.

84 DeLancey, M. W. and Benneh, George: "Cameroon". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cameroon>. November 11, 2022.

85 Ajayi, JF Ade: *Recent Trends in African History From Earliest Times to Independence*. By Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson and Jan Vansina., London and New York, Longman Group, 1995. xvi+ 546. *The Journal of African History*, 1997, 123–177.

86 Meredith, Martin: *Historia współczesnej Afryki [History of modern Africa]*, Warszawa, 2020, 1–814.

87 Pakt Ligi Narodów, Paryż, 28 czerwca 1919 r. [Pact of the League of Nations, Paris, 28 June 1919.] (Dz. U. z 1920 r. nr 35 poz. 200) in: Kocot Kazimierz, Wolfke Karol, Wybór dokumentów do nauki prawa międzynarodowego [A selection of documents for the study of international law], Wrocław 1978; www.grocjusz.edu.pl/Documents/pln.html 16. 07. 2019].

88 Calvocoressi, Peter: *Polityka międzynarodowa 1945–2000 [International politics 1945–2000]*, Warszawa 2002, 1–903.

The World War II period, as in the case of other colonies in Africa (with the exception of the Italian colonies), did not bring to Cameroon specific changes in political status, but only a change of name and legal formula concerning the rules of governance of the country, and enigmatic promises of future decolonisation, not defined by any timeframe. This was in conjunction with the provisions of the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations (UN), established in 1945, and at the same time the self-dissolution of the League of Nations, which took place a year later, on April 18, 1946.

The international legal basis for UN participation in the heralded decolonisation process was the UN Charter, proclaiming the equality and self-determination of peoples as a universal principle, developed through the provisions on colonial territories contained in its Chapters XI (Declaration on Dependent Areas), XII (International Trusteeship System) and XIII (Trusteeship Council; its composition, function and procedures).⁸⁹

The Trusteeship Council, to which custody of dependent and trust territories was entrusted and which was established to guide and supervise decolonisation processes, was among the UN's principal organs from its inception. The Trusteeship Council concluded individual trusteeship agreements, and was also required to prepare annual reports, submitted to the UN General Assembly, based on a questionnaire from the Trusteeship Council by the governing authorities of the individual trust territories. The former League of Nations Mandate Areas, and this was the category of Cameroon until 1945, became one of the groups constituting UN Trust Territories. Cameroon thus ceased to be a League of Nations mandated territory, becoming a trust territory of the newly created United Nations, still under the same administration; French and British.

The partition of Cameroon carried out in 1919 by the power of a conference held in Paris, whose sole decision-makers were European politicians, resulted in the cutting of socio-culturally homogeneous territories, the effects of which became apparent after independence. Independent Cameroon became one of many African states whose borders – which obligatorily became the borders of former colonial units – did not coincide with socio-cultural boundaries. In part, contemporary African conflicts have their roots in colonial delimitations, which led to the division of ethnic groups between the territories of different states,

89 Antonowicz, Lech. ONZ: bilans dekolonizacji i perspektywy jej zakończenia [UN: taking stock of decolonisation and prospects for ending it], in: *Narody Zjednoczone; między oczekiwaniem a spełnieniem* [United Nations; between expectation and fulfilment], [red.] Łoś-Nowak, Teresa. Wrocław 1995, 1–141.

while on the other hand, the newly created territories united foreign ethnic groups within their borders.⁹⁰ As a result, Africa today remains one of the most conflict-prone continents in the world.⁹¹

The events of the ensuing decades testified that the defeat of the Germans in World War I led to a shift in the global balance of power and a new future for Cameroon with concomitant effects on the country's past and present geopolitical construct.

While revisiting the topic in 2015, Willibrod Dze-Ngwa, one of Cameroon's most renowned historians stated that the history of World War I and its impact on Cameroon have been assessed extensively by eminent scholars from Cameroon and abroad. Although his claim is mostly accurate and would practically mean putting the subject to rest, such research have so far neglected a geopolitical perspective. Consequently, this paper takes a detour, first revisiting the era of German Kamerun, reexamining its legacy, and then proceeding to World War I, breaking down the events that led to Cameroon's partition while rearticulating their impact on the country's current geopolitical construct with special attention to the ongoing armed conflict in the former British Southern Cameroon, now the Anglophone region of Cameroon otherwise known as Ambazonia. The paper further addresses how the partition of the German Kamerun into British and French colonial spheres of influence after World War I, with boundaries that remain to this day, contributed to the separatist war that is threatening to rip Cameroon apart.

The paper uses Cohen's definition of geopolitics as "the theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space."⁹² This definition, as stated by Leonhardt van Efferink, contains two elements that are crucial within the concept of geopolitics: power (influence, politics) and space (territory, soil). The central role in international politics is typical for the definition of Kjellen⁹³. This

90 M. Meredith..., 17, cf. *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: Explaining Diffusion and Escalation*, ed., Steven E. Lobell, Philip Mauceri, Gordonsville, New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, 1–213.

91 Ngege, Ransom Tanyu: *Human security in conflict-affected regions: coping capacity of women and children in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon*, Kigali, Africa Online & Publications Library, 2022, 1–32.

92 Cohen, Saul Bernard: *Geopolitics of the world system*, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003, 1–435.

93 *The Definition of Geopolitics – The Classical, French and Critical Traditions*, [https://exploringgeopolitics.org/publication_efferink_van_leonhardt_the_definition_of_geopolitics_classical_french_critical/] 2009

can be reflected in the contestations that have shaped the political evolution of Cameroon from 1884 to present.

German *Kamerun* (1884–1916)

The German annexation of *Kamerun* on July 12, 1884, is in reference to the competitive trading activities of the Woerman and Jantzen and Thormaehlen enterprises with the Dualas after 1860. The British and French were astounded by the German annexation of *Kamerun* because Otto von Bismarck, Germany's chancellor had so far no interest in colonial affairs. To support his position, he once compared colonial adventure to "the silken sables in the noble families of Poland who have no shirts on their backs"⁹⁴ This statement by Bismarck attests to the fact that Prussia's Polish provinces of the Grand Duchy of Posen, East and West Prussia⁹⁵ are an intriguing site for a reconnaissance of colonial relations in that their acquisition precedes that of Germany's overseas colonies from 1884 by over a century, allowing for an examination of the legacy of Germany's clonial rule in *Kamerun* on enduring patterns of Prussian rule in the east.⁹⁶ Predictably, Poles who had experienced German colonialism first-hand actively supported British colonial efforts in Cameroon, and in opposition to German annexation Stefan Szolc-Rogozieński and Leopold Janikowski signed treaties with local chiefs on behalf of the British Government on the slopes of Mount Cameroon. To solidify her position in *Kamerun* and prevent British and French attempts to derail German annexation, Bismarck organised the infamous Berlin Conference from November 1884 to February 1885, resulting in the Final Act of Berlin, which formally recognised the acquisition of African territories by European powers.

The ease with which Germany annexed *Kamerun* is both predicated on her ability to forestall Britain and France as well as the little resistance from the British and the French. It is important to underline here that the common reference to Cameroon as a political entity only after German annexation is a misrepresentation of academic scholarship and contributes to the hoax that Africa did not have established political entities prior to the European scramble and partition of the continent. In reality, Cameroon may not have constituted a single

94 Ngoh, Victor Julius: The political evolution of Cameroon, 1884–1961, Portland, Poland State University, 1979, 1–120.

95 Piotrowski, N. L.: Poles Under German Rule. Current History (1916–1940), 1916, 473–477.

96 Healy, Róisín: From Commonwealth to Colony? Poland under Prussia. In The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 109–125.

political entity as it was during German colonial administration, but the same components that make up a political entity – language, history, ethnicity, culture and/or society – were present in the microscopic nations that existed before German *Kamerun*.



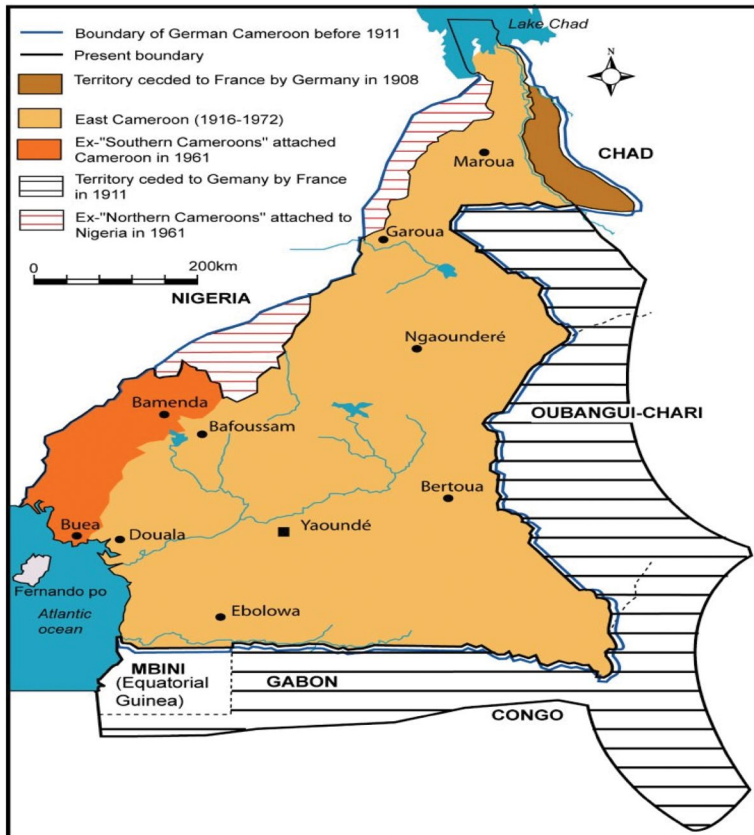
Map 1: Location of the various Duala nations of Cameroon⁹⁷

Source: Wikipedia, Duala people

The sketch map above depicts the several nations that comprised Cameroon before German annexation and occupation. The Ewodi, the Bodiman, the Pongo, the Bakole, the Bakweri (or Kwe), the Bamboko, the Isubu (Isuwu or Bimbians),

⁹⁷ The location of the various Duala ethnic groups of Cameroon https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duala_people [06. 10. 2022].

the Limba (or Malimba), the Mungo, the Wovea, and the Oroko (or Balondo) are among them; who are collectively known as the Sawa people.⁹⁸



Map 2: German Kamerun, 1911⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Eckert, A. (2001). Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their hinterland, c. 1600-c. 1960*. *African Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 509–511.

⁹⁹ Dze-Ngwa, Willibrod: *The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014*, South Shields, International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science, 2015, 78–90.

Source: Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014. (2015), 80.

The boundaries of modern-day Cameroon were laid down in the treaties concluded with Britain and France in 1893 and 1911 respectively.¹⁰⁰ The preceding map shows the extent to which German Kamerun went by 1911. It can be rightly argued that the Berlin Conference fostered cooperation amongst European powers for the most part. Apart from minor rivalries in Cameroon, a typical example of a major rivalry that contributed to reshaping of German colonial boundaries in Kamerun is the standoff against French at Agadir in 1911.

The Agadir Crisis of 1911 was a brief crisis triggered by the deployment of a substantial number of French troops in Morocco's interior in April 1911, as well as the deployment of the German *SMS Panther* gunboat to Agadir, a Moroccan Atlantic port.¹⁰¹ While Germany did not oppose France's expansion, it did want territorial recompense for itself and in so doing threatened war, and incited German nationalists. On November 4, 1911, negotiations between Berlin and Paris ended the crisis: France took over Morocco as a protectorate in exchange for territory concessions from the French Congo to German Kamerun.¹⁰² This would later play out to the advantage of the French after the defeat of the Germans in World War I.

Moreover, the argument that Duala Kings and princes gave up their territory to the Germans because they were tired of ruling it themselves, and were satisfied with compensation in the form of *gifts* from the Germans is unsettled. Schapper and Kirmse claim the Duala kings surrendered because they did not want to rule any longer, but the reason was instead, that they were aware of the German military supremacy and decided not to fight.¹⁰³

German colonial rule in *Kamerun* lasted for 32 years, until the end of World War I. During its years of presence in Kamerun, the Germans established the country's borders, monetised the economy, set up a system that facilitated

100 Van der Linden, Mieke. German Cameroon: In *The Acquisition of Africa (1870–1914)*, Leiden, Brill Nijhoff, 2017, 174–214.

101 Lewis, Neil Sherwood: German policy in southern Morocco during the Agadir crisis of 1911, Michigan, University of Michigan, 1977, II-349.

102 Vojinović, Miloš and Christopher Clark: *The Sleepwalkers-How Europe Went to War in 1914*, Harper, London, 2012, Balcanica, 2013, 422–432.

103 Schapper, U., and S. Kirmse: "Entanglements and Interactions Within a Plural Legal Order: The Case of the German Colony of Cameroon, 1884–1916." *One Law for All* (2012), 243–264.

expropriation of land from the natives, instituted administrative and governmental structures, laid the foundation for a sizable infrastructure, and accelerated the development of cash crop plantations, including those for cocoa, coffee, bananas, palm oil, cotton, and rubber.¹⁰⁴ While this may seem appealing, it should be recalled that the goal of German colonial policy and administration in Kamerun was to deliver raw materials to the German market and industrial complex, not to develop Kamerun per se. For instance, the roads and railways built were only to connect inland plantations with coastal areas to facilitate transportation and shipment, while the housing infrastructure was built to accommodate Germans who came to Kamerun to serve in the colonial administration.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, German plantations and labour policies reinforced the idea of a German state, bringing people from different microscopic nations together thus contributing in knitting the two Anglophone regions of present-day Cameroon into an identity which has survived till date and within which ranks there are identified dissenting voices waging a separatist since 2017.

Boundary disputes between Britain, France, and Germany in Kamerun and its environs prompted the negotiation of bilateral treaties between the Germans and the British from 1885 to 1913, and the Germans and the French from 1885 to 1911.¹⁰⁶

Some of the accords struck with the British included the April 21, 1885 Accord, which granted Germany the whole coast up to the head land near the mouth of the Cross River, then a line linking this point to the historic falls of Calabar¹⁰⁷, April 29-June 16, 1885 London Accord covering a specific geostrategic area, namely their various zones of influence in the Gulf of Guinea¹⁰⁸ and

104 Lekane, Gillo Momo, and Lucky Asuelime: One country, three colonial legacies: the politics of colonialism, capitalism and development in the pre- and post-colonial Cameroon, Essex, *Journal for Contemporary History*, 2017, 134–153.

105 Lekane, Gillo Momo, and Lucky Asuelime: One country, three colonial legacies: the politics of colonialism, capitalism and development in the pre- and post-colonial Cameroon, 2017, 134–153.

106 Pierre, Nghonda Jean, and Saha Zacharie: Colonial Cartography as The Diplomatic Tool in the Territorial Formation of Kamerun (1884–1916), 2022, 1–20.

107 Mveng, Engelbert. *Histoire du Cameroun. Tome 2*, Yaoundé, CEPER, 1985, 61.

108 Münster; “Abkommen zwischen Deutschland und England über die Abgrenzung von Interessensphären am Golfe von Guinea. Vom 29. April / 7 Mai 1885” in Dr Ruppel, 1912, *Die Landesgesetzgebung für das Schutzgebiet Kamerun. Sammlung der in Kamerun zur Zeit geltenden völkerrechtlichen verträge. Gesetze, Verordnungen und Dienstvorschriften mit Anmerkungen und Registern. Auf Grund amtlicher Quelle herausgegeben*, Berlin, 1–2.

the London Agreement of July 27-August 2nd, 1886, arising from diplomatic exchanges and prompting the two sides to agree to pursue their efforts east of Rio del Rey up to Yola.¹⁰⁹ The Franco-German boundary accords were based on the trace line between Kamerun and French Equatorial Africa.¹¹⁰ Examples include the Berlin Protocol of December 24, 1885, in which Germany renounced the land south of the Campo River, the Berlin Protocol of February 24, 1894, which concerned the boundary of colonial possessions in the Lake Tchad region, i.e. the north-eastern frontier of Kamerun.¹¹¹ and the Berlin Convention of 18 April 1908 delimiting Kamerun from French Congo.¹¹²

Even though the treaties mentioned above confirmed Germany's annexation of Kamerun, they also indicated that British and French interests in Cameroon/Cameroun were not yet reached, as evidenced by their joint attack on Germany in Kamerun during World War I, which resulted in the termination of German administration, partition, and subsequent administration of Southern British Cameroons as part of Nigeria. Furthermore, German colonial administration and missionary activities such as those of "the Basel Mission, German Baptist Mission, German Pallotine Fathers and German Sacred Heart Fathers evangelised in the territory in ways that enhanced the dual colonial agenda of exploitation and pseudo-civilisation" within the borders of what became Anglophone Cameroon were unusual in style and instilled in the people a sense of uniqueness that manifested itself in the campaign for an independent Southern Cameroon before and after 1961.¹¹³

World War I in Kamerun, condominium and partition

As part of the *Kamerun* campaign during World War I, Allied Expeditionary Forces invaded German *Kamerun*. By February 1916, British, French and a small contingent of Belgian forces had beaten and driven the Germans from Cameroon.

109 Ayuk Walter Tankang. *Basic Facts on the Bakassi Crisis*. Unpublished, 9.

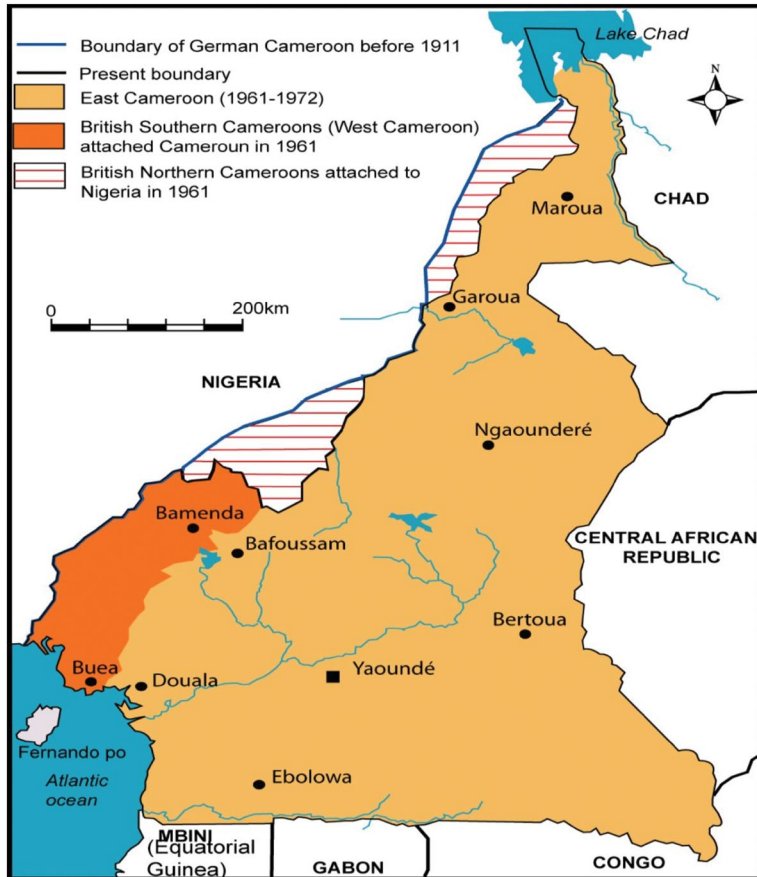
110 Pierre, Nghonda Jean, and Saha Zacharie: Colonial Cartography as The Diplomatic Tool in the Territorial Formation of Kamerun (1884–1916), 2022, 1–20.

111 Owona, Adalbert: *La naissance du Cameroun : 1884–1914*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996, 50–52.

112 Owona, Adalbert: *La naissance du Cameroun : 1884–1914*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1996, 49.

113 Lang, Michael Kpughe: "The Plight of German Missions in Mandate Cameroon: An Historical Analysis." *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Africanos= Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 2, no. 3 (2017). 111–130.

Following Germany's defeat in World War I, erstwhile German Kamerun was partitioned between Great Britain and France into two distinct territories, first as "Mandated Territories" of the League of Nations and later as "Trust Territories" of the United Nations following the end of World War II in 1945.



Map 3: The Unequal Partition of Cameroon in 1916¹¹⁴

114 Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad: The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014, South Shields, *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, 2015, 78–90.

Source: Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014. 2 (2015), 83.

The borders of the British-French Mandates/Trusts in Cameroon were settled by the so called “Picot line”. On March 4, 1916, Lancelot Olyphant, an official of the British Foreign Office, met with George Picot, a French diplomat in London¹¹⁵ and divided the territory into two. The French chose the area to the East of the line, known as French Cameroun and made up of approximately 80% of the territory, whereas the British chose the area to the West of the line of about 20% of the territory, referred to as British Cameroons¹¹⁶. British Cameroons was further divided into two parts known as British Southern Cameroons (the West part of the actual Cameroon) and British Northern Cameroons, and attached to its Nigerian colony in an attempt to ease colonial administration.

The partition of German Kamerun between the British and the French was formalised in 1919 with the signing of the Milner and Simon Agreement.¹¹⁷ Above is the map of Cameroon showing former German Kamerun boundaries, the British and French spheres of influence after partition. Apart from land disputes between ethnic groups, two contemporary and critical examples of conflicts in Cameroon that have their roots in colonial boundary delimitations include the Bakassi crisis and the ongoing armed conflict in the Anglophone region.

1. Interstate conflicts: Territorial claims over Bakassi

Territorial disputes over the possession of oil-laden border areas such as the Bakassi peninsula can be viewed as a consequence of Cameroon’s chattered history.¹¹⁸ While the discovery of oil in Bakassi in the 1990s played a significant role

115 Mabeu, Marie Christelle, and Roland Pongou: The Interplay Between Colonial History and Postcolonial Institutions: Evidence from Cameroon, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 2021, 1–35.

116 Ngege, Ransom Tanyu. Human security in conflict-affected regions: coping capacity of women and children in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon., Kigali, Africa Online & Publications Library, 2022, 1–32.

117 Nkatow Mafany Christian: The Anglophone-Cameroonian Armed Conflict in North and South West Regions of Cameroon: The Rulings of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Vienna, *Commonwealth Journal of Academic Research*, 2020, 32–64.

118 Baye, Francis: Implications of the Bakassi conflict resolution for Cameroon. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 10, no. 1, 2010, 9–34.

in the more than 20-year dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria, the territorial disputes surrounding the peninsula are a prime example of the arbitrary colonial boundaries that separate states and ethnic groups in Africa.¹¹⁹ Incorporated within the political structure of the Old Calabar Kingdom, the Bakassi peninsula was first inhabited by the Efik around 1450.¹²⁰ Britain signed a protection treaty on September 10, 1884 with the kings and chiefs of Old Calabar to justify her rule over region and its people. Following German annexation of Kamerun, Britain and Germany decided to draw their respective borders in Africa on November 15, 1893. A later agreement, which encompassed all British and German possessions from Yola to Lake Chad, was reached on March 19, 1906.

Cameroon and Nigeria have been at odds over the definition of maritime borders since 1971 with its origins embedded in the Anglo-German treaties of late 1800s and early 1900s. Growing desires for self-determination and political autonomy for Anglophone Cameroonians exacerbated the country's internal difficulties, which resulted in the persecution and murder of Nigerian nationals by the Cameroonian government in 1992–1993. On December 31, 1993, Nigeria sent its troops to the peninsula on the pretext that it was defending its people who had allegedly been mistreated by Cameroonian soldiers. In 1981, a news report in Cameroon's national media alleging the Nigerian military of invading its territory on the peninsula and firing on Cameroon's soldiers brought Nigeria and Cameroon to the verge of war for control of the Bakassi Peninsula. Five Nigerian troops were killed as a result of the counter-military attack by Cameroon.¹²¹ On December 12, 1993, Cameroon filed a complaint with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding Nigeria's occupation of Bakassi, and on October 10, 2002, ICJ ruled in favour of Cameroon.¹²² The court's ruling was generally upheld by the colonial borders, particularly the 1913 Anglo-German boundary agreement.¹²³ Arguably, territorial claims over Bakassi are far from settled, and the

119 Anyu, J. Ndumbe: The international court of justice and border-conflict resolution in Africa: The Bakassi peninsula conflict. *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18, no. 3, 2007, 39–55.

120 Okoi, Obasesam: Why nations fight: The causes of the Nigeria–Cameroon Bakassi Peninsula conflict. *African Security* 9, no. 1, 2016, 42–65.

121 Okoi, Obasesam: Why nations fight: The causes of the Nigeria–Cameroon Bakassi Peninsula conflict. *African Security* 9, no. 1, 2016, 42–65.

122 Shaibu, M. T., S. N. Azom, and E. S. Nwanze: An appraisal of the dominant causes of boundary conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon: the Bakassi Peninsula perspective. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 9, 2015, 25–47.

123 Beckly, Agbor: The Perceptions/Views of Cameroon–Nigerian Bakassi border conflict by the Bakassi people, 2013, 1–110.

2006 Green Tree Accord¹²⁴ only provided a temporary solution as evidenced by the ongoing separatist conflict in the Anglophone region of Cameroon that make up the former British Southern Cameroon within which lies the Bakassi peninsula.

2. National conflicts: The case of Southern Cameroon

Following World War I and the defeat of the Germans by the Allies, German Cameroon was divided between Britain and France. The splitting of German Kamerun into British and French realms had important political ramifications and had a long-term impact on the establishment of Anglophone and Francophone identities. The Anglo-French partition from 1916 (the Milner-Simon Declaration) delineated the international boundary between British Cameroons and French Cameroon. The League of Nations recognised this territorial delimitation in 1922, when the two regions were put separately under League of Nations Mandate B. This meant that France and Britain, who had taken over German Cameroon, would be directly in charge of these areas under the League of Nations.¹²⁵ The Anglo-French Treaty of 9 January 1931, signed by the governor-general of Nigeria and the governor of French Cameroon, further reinforced the geographical alignment. Southern Cameroons was therefore under British authority for over 46 years, from 1915 to 1961.¹²⁶ British dominion made an unmistakable effect on the area, leaving it with an Anglo-Saxon history; the language, educational, legal, administrative, political, governance, and institutional culture, as well as value systems, are all of English origin.¹²⁷ Apart from

124 Under the auspices of Kofi Annan, Cameroon and Nigeria signed a historic agreement in Greentree in June 2006, outlining the modalities and timetable for implementing the International Court of Justice's 2002 ruling transferring the Bakassi peninsula from Nigeria to Cameroon. That historic event demonstrated both countries' determination and resolve to move beyond a difficult past and, with a shared vision and aspiration to strengthen and respect the rule of international law, address their border dispute in a way that ensured lasting peace and good neighbourly relations between the peoples of Cameroon and Nigeria.

125 Nkwi, Walter Gam: Britain, UN and the Decolonisation of British Southern Cameroons: The Past Foundations of the Present day Ambazonia War of Independence in Cameroon. Leiden, Universiteit Leiden, 2020, 279–311.

126 Konings, Piet: The Anglophone Cameroon-Nigeria boundary: opportunities and conflicts. *African Affairs* 104, no. 415, 2005, 275–301.

127 Anyefru, Emmanuel: Paradoxes of internationalisation of the Anglophone problem in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 1, 2010, 85–101.

Cameroon's failure as a democratic state as a result of a constipated constitution and rigged elections, state repression and marginalisation of Anglophones, the main reason for the ongoing armed conflict in the Anglophone region is its tumultuous history starting with German occupation and later British and French partition, as well as their push for a 1961 UN-organised plebiscite to decide on the future of the territory.¹²⁸

Willis et al. note that “the land boundary and colonial policy implemented by the British and French colonial forces [...] acted as a physical divide between border communities” resulting in complex cultural differences manifested in community practices and embedded in the country's socio-political structure.¹²⁹

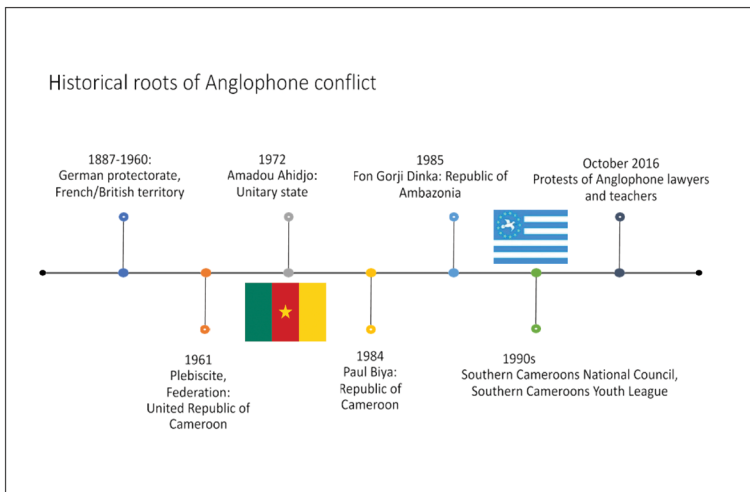


Figure 1: Historical roots of Anglophone conflict¹³⁰

Source: Pelican, Michaela. The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon—historical and political background. (2022). 10¹³¹

128 Dicklitch, Susan: The Southern Cameroons and minority rights in Cameroon. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29, no. 1, 2011, 49–62.

129 Ngege, Ransom Tanyu: Human security in conflict-affected regions: coping capacity of women and children in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, Kigali, Africa Online & Publications Library, 2022, 1–32.

130 Pelican, Michaela: The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon—historical and political background, Freiburg, Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut für kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung, 2022, 1–30.

131 2019 Copyright of image files: the Cameroon flag is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license; the Ambazonia flag is in the public domain

In 2016, strike led by lawyers and teachers to protest against government continuous interference with common law system and Anglo-Saxon system of education practised in Anglophone Cameroon was met with brutality. The situation escalated and in 2017 degenerated into an armed conflict that has thus far attracted little international attention. The unequal partition of Cameroon between the two powers, with France receiving the lion's share, sowed the seeds of the ongoing separatist war, affecting the country's present territorial boundaries.¹³²

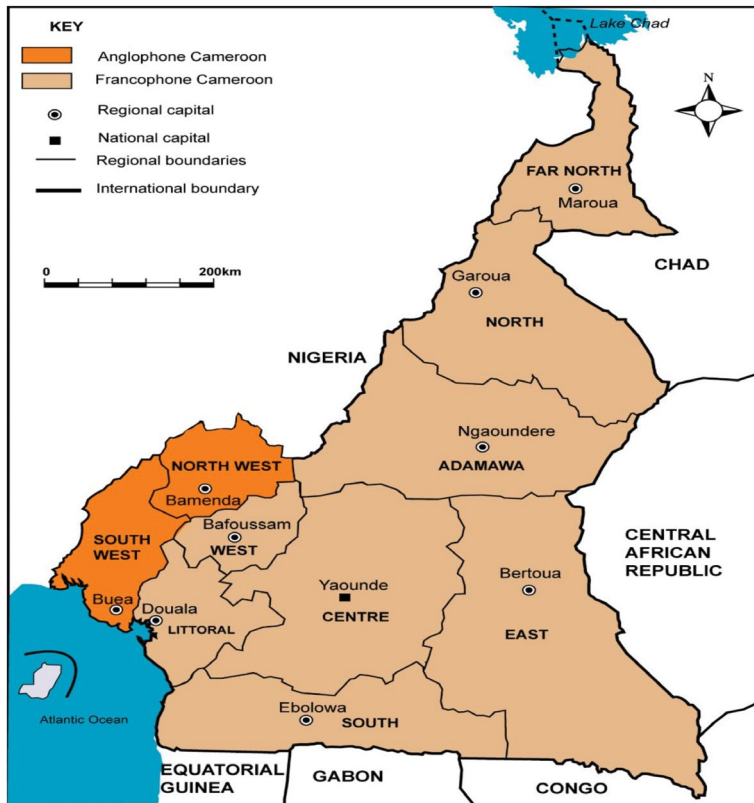
Below is the map of present-day Cameroon indicating the territorial boundaries of former French Cameroun and former British Southern Cameroon.

Disruptive land and boundary disputes between ethnic groups

Emmanuel M. Mbah believes The Bamenda Grassfield of Cameroon has been the subject of land/boundary disputes since the beginning of European colonial control in Cameroon in 1885.¹³⁴ When Germany annexed Cameroon in 1884, it set about administering Bamenda with a policy of divide and rule. From 1902 to 1915 the German colonial government in Cameroon recognised Bali-Nyonga suzerainty over a large area in the region. For this recognition, Bali-Nyonga was to assist the Germans in subduing surrounding village-groups. German colonial support for Bali-Nyonga and a small number of favoured village-groups resulted in the demarcation of arbitrary boundaries reflecting that dispensation. This was the case between Bali-Nyonga and surrounding Widikum ethnic villages. With German support, Bali-Nyonga was able to maintain a strong hold over Widikum village-groups, depriving them of some of their ancestral land. In the Bamenda region, Widikum ethnic villages refused to acquiesce in German policies that placed them under Bali-Nyonga, and some rebelled by proclaiming autonomy. These villages were razed by a joint Bali-Nyonga-German force and their subjects were rounded up and taken to specific locations inside Bali-Nyonga. Many ended up as labourers in German plantations on the coast while their land was taken over by Bali-Nyonga subjects. The two village-groups most affected by this

133 Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad: *The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014*, South Shields, International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science, 2015, 78–90.

134 Mbah, Emmanuel M: "Disruptive colonial boundaries and attempts to resolve land/boundary disputes in the Grasslands of Bamenda, Cameroon." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 9, no. 3 (2009), 11–32.



Map 4: Reunified (present-day) Cameroon¹³³

Source: Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. *The first world war and its aftermath in Cameroon: A historical evaluation of a Centenary, 1914–2014*. (2015), 87.

were Ngyen-Mbo and Ngyen-Muwa. While these two persistently refused to accept the position of vassal to Bali-Nyonga, the initial British response was to maintain the set-up established by German authorities. In an attempt to take advantage of the transition from German to British rule, five Widikum villages

¹³² Agbor, Thierry Roland Tabi: *An Analysis of the Anglophone Political Demands in Cameroon from 1961 To 2018*, Public Policy and Administration Research, 2019, 26–38.

again rebelled by seceding from Bali-Nyonga. But when the villages of Ngyen-Mbo and Ngyen-Muwa who inhabited land adjoining Bali-Nyonga attempted to secede for the second time, their newly constructed huts were again destroyed by the British in 1921 and their subjects were rounded up again and herded to Bali-Nyonga. These land/boundary disputes between Bali-Nyonga and Widikum ethnic groups have persisted to this day. Had the Germans not instituted their policy of ethnic favouritism, upheld to some degree by the British, there would have been less land disputes in the region.

Conclusions

In addition to being clouded by controversy, Cameroon's historical and political evolution could be blamed for the ongoing armed conflict in its Anglophone region. Starting with German annexation in 1884, partition in 1919, independence of French Cameroun in 1960, UN-organised plebiscite in British Cameroons and British Southern Cameroon in particular in 1961, and independence of British Southern Cameroon in 1961 by way of reunification with French Cameroun, Cameroon went through a historical development that would ultimately result in a skewed geopolitical future. As political scientists, we are not in a position to advise on the appropriate course of action for the territorial issues that Cameroon is presently dealing with in the shape of a separatist war, but any successful solution would have to take the country's turbulent past into account.

5. Four famines in Rwanda. The social and political impact of natural disasters on the legitimacy of Rwandan governance¹³⁵

Famines had a strong impact on Rwandan social and political history. Together with other natural disasters, they were drivers of social and political change; they could reduce a lineage's power and increase the power of a rival lineage. Famines, together with cattle diseases, also could change what later would become known as ethnic identities: they could turn *abahutu* into *abatutsi* and vice-versa. However, in the large literature about ethnicity, race and ethnic cleavages which emerged after the 1940s under Belgian rule, famines do not play any major role. Neither did they later, not even authors who deny the importance of ethnic affiliations and reject the use of the Hutu and Tutsi label for the time before the 1930s invoke the argument, famines could provide them with. But if the notion of *umuhutu* described a lineage (*umuryango*) and family's (*inzu*) social position towards a chief and the notion of *umutsi* circumscribed the wealth and influence a family and lineage enjoyed, it becomes clear that cattle diseases and famines could reduce the wealth (in cattle) and the sheer number of a *abatutsi* lineage in way that was tantamount to downward social mobility. A *abatutsi* lineage losing a lot of cattle could, in the next generation, be regarded as *abahutu* and vice versa. For the controversy about Hutu and Tutsi being ethnicities, this means: the more famines Rwanda experienced and the harsher and more widespread they were, the less likely it is that the Tutsi and Hutu labels described kinship, ethnicity or hereditary links. We can then expect *abahutu* lineages to rise to *abatutsi* status by acquiring cattle, influence and *abatutsi* wives from the lower *abatutsi* strata and *abatutsi* lineages to fall to the position of *abahutu* by losing cattle, influence, access to the royal court and through mixed marriages.

But this is only one aspect of famines' social and political impact. The second is purely political: in a society with strong rainmakers (*abavubyi*) in the different regions and *abami* claiming to be able to make rain, a drought-driven famine

135 Research for this article was sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN grant no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02497 "A history of Rwanda").

must have been likely to undermine the rule of those rainmakers *inzu* and *imiry-ango* – but much less the power of the *umwani* in Nyanza, whose power was less grounded in claims of supernatural powers. Only if Rwandans attributed a ruler (no matter if traditional or colonial) the responsibility to care for rainfall, feeding the population and keeping it healthy would famines undermine this ruler's legitimacy and make riots and rebellions more likely.

There were four famines in Rwanda, which one can analyze in order to investigate these links between political legitimacy and natural disasters: the 1905 famine, which took place when Rwanda was *de facto* (though not *de jure*) under German colonial rule, but when the only legitimate (though weak) ruler over central Rwanda was Yuhi V. Musinga, the 1917 famine, which was triggered by the fighting between Belgian and German troops (and their caravans) when German East Africa was ruled indirectly through Yuhi V. Musinga, but did neither undermine Musinga's legitimacy nor the existing political establishment, the famine 15 years later, which the Belgians used to reform the system of governance and the famine of 1944, triggered by the Belgian war effort, which shattered the foundations of the Rwandan kingdom and, at the same time, of Belgian rule over Rwanda. This happened, because in 1944, the colonial rulers had taken responsibility for providing basic public services in Rwanda, which earlier, in 1905 and 1917, no Rwandan would have attributed to a ruler, no matter if traditional or not. It is therefore the role of the state, whose change over time explained the difference in the political consequences of the three famines.

The argument proceeds as follows: first, I will explain why the regime of Yuhi V. Musinga enjoyed a very weak legitimacy in 1905, which, however, the 1905 famine did not undermine. Then, I describe the consequences of German indirect rule and explain, why the 1917 famine did not affect the legitimacy of Yuhi V. Musinga's rule despite the famine's disastrous social and human consequences – and why it did not affect the legitimacy of colonial rule over Rwanda, although it was the colonial struggle that had triggered the famine. The last part shows the enormous effects of the 1944 famine – the de-legitimation of both – Belgian colonial rule and of the king, who, at that time, was already a king appointed by the Belgian administration and the Church and hence had not much attributes of traditional legitimacy left.

A weak king in a ravaged country

The system of succession introduced probably by King Rujugira, who had taken power in a coup, was very fragile and prone to conflicts between a king's sons,

legitimate and illegitimate.¹³⁶ In a system which allowed kings (and notables) to maintain a plethora of official and unofficial wives, succession wars were very likely to occur and extremely likely to destabilize the kingdom. This was the case in the late seventeenth century with the succession from Rujugira to Ndabarasa, which triggered a many-year-long civil war, including huge refugee emigration to Ndorwa and a famine.

All these aspects became visible in the nineteenth century during and after Kigeri Rwabugeri's rule. Then, already a complicated system of power sharing among the leading clans (*amwoko*) was in place: the *abega* had the right to appoint the king mother, and several other clans could nominate court advisors (*abiru*). The kingdom was centralized in the sense that it had managed to incorporate several smaller entities over time, Gisaka being the last one.¹³⁷ European observers often depicted the king as an absolute ruler alike the kings under French absolutism. The king had the right to decide over life and death of his subjects and retained the property over the food and the land in the country, but this often was a theoretical claim only – especially if one considers the lack of written records, the slow and imperfect implementation of court verdicts and the king's dependency on his advisors and (in the case of young and inexperienced rulers) the king mother and her lineage heads. In reality, power was quite decentralized and scattered across the wealthiest lineage heads and the *abiru*.

This showcases another reason why the system led to a permanent increase of *abega* power: the king's succession might have been contested among a king's sons, while the king and the leaders of the king mother providing lineage could easily decide about the nomination of the king mother, which no other woman could contest. If one considers the different roles of women and men in ancient Rwanda, it becomes clear that – as long as a king's heir agreed – the *abega* lineage leadership was free to choose the woman they regarded as best suited for the job, while the succession to the king was open to a contest between his sons.

For Rwandan popular tradition Rwabugiri was a heroic ruler. During his reign the country's nucleus, Nduga, raided the northern statelet of Ndorwa, killed its queen, who had ruled together with her adolescent son, attacked Burundi in the south and Ankole in the north, and moved into Kinyaga, where Rwabugiri left his representatives on *ibikingi* plots. They began collecting taxes and invaded

136 Vansina, Jan: *Le Rwanda ancien. Le royaume nyiginya*. Paris: Karthala 2021, 134.

137 D'Arianoff, Alexandre: *Histoire des Bagesera. Souverains du Gisaka*. Bruxelles: Institut Royal Colonial Belge 1952, 113–121.

Ijwi Island twice. The second time was successful, but Rwabugiri ruled the island relying on the indirect rule of a local collaborator.¹³⁸

Rwabugiri died after the move to Ndorwa, but he managed to decide about his succession. He informed the *abiru* that he wanted his son Rutarindwa to become the next king. Unfortunately, he had killed Rutarindwa's mother, a woman from the *abakono* clan, during the fights following his own succession after Rwogera's death and so he needed a replacement for her, because every *mwani* needed a king mother, and this king mother had to come from the *abega* clan. Kanjogera, Rwabugiri's favourite wife, was an *umwega*. He picked her as a stepmother for Rutarindwa. But Kanjogera had a son of her own. According to the royal esoteric code, a king mother could not become stepmother of a young *umwani* if she had a son of her own. The rule had probably emerged because the *ubwiru* had anticipated what would happen in such a case – and what precisely did happen with Rutarindwa. His uncles jumped at the chance Rwabugiri's breach of the code offered them. They started to isolate the new *umwani* and mount intrigues and conspiracies against him. We do not know the details, but it took them several years, during which Rutarindwa ruled. Then the Belgians unwillingly came to the *abegas'* rescue.

Half a year after Rutarindwa's accession to power, a Belgian detachment arrived at Shengi from the Congo Free State and Rutarindwa sent one of his closest supporters, Bisangwa to meet them. The attempt to repel the much better armed Belgians and their Congolese Askari – the Rwandans called them *abapari* – ended in a massacre of the Rwandan troops.¹³⁹ Because of the death of many famous fighters, including Bisangwa, it was impossible to downplay or ignore the defeat. Rutarindwa appeared as a weak leader and bad strategist, and he lost several important allies on the battlefield. The *abega* leaders then moved ahead with their final assault. When Rutarindwa was building his residence in Rucunshu near Marangara, he lived in an ordinary hut without much security. In December 1896, Kabare and Ruhinangiko, Kanjogera's brothers, assembled an army there and attacked Rutarindwa and his followers.¹⁴⁰ Somewhere during

138 Notes originales J. M. Derscheid (Interrogatoire de Kayambele, prétendu fils de Mirambwe IV, Rutshuru, 26.3.1931. Expédition de Kigeri IV Rwabugiri dans le Mpororo, Derscheid Collection, University of Florida. For Rwabugiri's Ijwi and Kinyaga campaigns see also Newbury, Catharine: *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press 1988, 54–57.

139 Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 54–57.

140 Ruanda 1895, avènement de Mibambwe IV (Rutarindwa), typescript, Derscheid Collection, University of Florida.

the battle that ensued, Kabare held up Musinga, who was an adolescent then, and proclaimed him to be the true king. Their followers rejoiced, while Rutarindwa's fighters escaped. Rutarindwa, convinced of his defeat, committed suicide together with some of his closest allies and someone set fire to his house.¹⁴¹

During the weeks and months to come, many prominent *abanyiginya* lineages lost their possessions, some died, and many others lost their influence at the court. The *abega* triumphed: they now had the king mother, Ruhinankiko, and Kabare, who made all important decisions in the background and could manipulate the boy Musinga at will. They also had reversed King Mutara II Rwogera's ban according to which his successors had to prevent the *abega* to offer the king mother and to chose a king mother from the other clans that were entitled to offer one, but hardly ever had had the chance to do so.¹⁴² Rwogera's move to sideline the *abega* had backlashed and made the *abega* the most powerful clan in the country.

Formally, the *abasindi* still provided the king, but it was a powerless king, an instrument in the hands of experienced, cold-blooded, and determined *abega* leaders. When in 1897 Captain Ramsay arrived at the court, Musinga had already passed the enthronisation ceremonies. But he was not the one to meet Ramsay, instead Ruhinankiko and a seasoned *umwiru* responsible for Kubandwa rites met with Ramsay. Foreign policy was no longer a competence of the king or the king mother.

The outcome of the Rucunshu coup was ambiguous. The *abega* gained more power in Nduga than ever, but the monarchy and the kingdom paid a high price for it.

Almost immediately, a rumour spread across the kingdom according to which Rwabugiri had fathered a boy, Biregeya, with one of his less prominent wives (or a concubine) before his death and that Rutarindwa had only agreed to become a kind of regent until that boy was old enough to take over the Karinga, according to Rwabugiri's will. During the battle at Rucunshu, Rutarindwa had protected the boy and taken care to smuggle him out of the reach of his enemies. His mother, Muserekande, had escaped to Urundi and later came back to Ndorwa, where she had hidden from her *abega* persecutors. This rumour was the beginning of

141 Des Forges, Alison L.: *Defeat Is the Only Bad News. Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 2011, 15–17

142 Kimenyi, Jean Berckmas: *De la déconstruction du Rwanda aux massacres des Tutsi en 1959. Témoignage d'un proche collaborateur du roi Mutara III Rudahigwa*, Kigali: NURC 2019, 4, 7, 78.

a propaganda campaign whose aim it was to undermine Musinga's legitimacy among lineages and notables who had not taken part in the Rucunshu coup. And it was quite successful: the periphery started to revolt, Rwabugiri's governors in Kinyaga rebelled, his representatives in Ijwi jumped into their boats and paddled back to the mainland. In a short time, the royal armies withdrew from many possessions Rwabugiri had conquered. All those who had benefitted from Rwabugiri's conquests and the favours he distributed afterwards now contested Musinga and did their best to undermine his reputation.¹⁴³ This was a situation the Europeans, who began to flock into Rwanda, could only dream of. When the first German colonial envoys arrived, they quickly understood how weak Musinga was and how dearly he needed outside support to stay in power and regain at least a part of what had been lost from Rwabugiri's conquests.

The 1905 famine in the North

In 1905, a famine began in Bugoyi, the Northwestern part of what now is Rwanda and what then belonged the peripheral regions of the Rwandan kingdom, where *abatutsi* rule was precarious, the king's influence weak and local *umwani*, lineage heads with their own succession rules and rites, ruled. When the famine began only a few Europeans had reached Bugoyi and Mulera, therefore there are only fragmentary oral sources available about the famine's causes. Des Forges assumed (based on oral accounts) the famine to be the result of the fighting between royal *abatutsi* envoys and the followers of the local *abami*. During these fights, the envoys had ravaged the countryside and looted the homesteads, treating the region as hostile territory. The local population usually fled to the hills and forests when an *abatutsi* army arrived. But even if they had food stocks, they were hardly able to take them into hiding.¹⁴⁴ Back then, there were two mission stations in the famine-hit regions: Nyundo, founded in 1900 in Bugoyi (in the hills above Gisenyi) and Rwaza, founded three years later on foot of the volcanos. According to Father Félix Dufays' graphic account, Rwandans starved to death in their fields, on the paths between the settlements, their corpses left to the wild animals. Mothers abandoned their babies, unable to feed them. But for the mission, the tragedy proved beneficial. First, new converts arrived to get food from the mission stocks, then, when rain fell, people started to carry gifts to

143 Ruanda 1895, avènement de Mibambwe IV (Rutarindwa), typescript, Derscheid Collection, University of Florida.

144 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 20–21.

the mission, convinced that the White Fathers, whom they saw as rainmakers of sorts, had conjured up the rainfall.¹⁴⁵

Although the royal court was at least partly responsible for the famine, because he had sent the looters to the Northern territories, the disaster did not impact on Musinga's legitimacy as a ruler. In the North, he had not much to lose anyway: if his *abatutsi* managed to get a foothold in the independent small kingdoms in Rukiga, it was because of his troops used force, not because the population longed to be ruled by the royal court. Outside Rukiga, hardly anybody knew about the fighting and the famine, but even if itinerant workers and dispossessed farmers reached Nduga, they could hardly count on local empathy: they regarded the *abakiga* as a rude, unreliable and thieving mob who deserved what they got. But there was yet another reason, why the king's legitimacy did not depend on the prevention or soothing of natural disasters: nobody expected him to intervene. If a drought happened, the rainmakers were to blame and they often fled to the highest mountain regions from the retaliation of their followers. If rain failed to fall, many rainmakers were lynched by their flock, if they did not escape in time.¹⁴⁶ The state was expected to provide security, military victories and booty in times of war and to contain domestic violence. If the royal court failed in these areas, his legitimacy was in danger. Nobody expected it to care for the population during disasters. Neither were the colonial powers: in 1905, the Germans only used raids by hastily deployed units to pacify riots and uprisings, they did not maintain larger military units which would have allowed a military occupation of the country. In 1906, they decided to deploy a civilian administration to Kigali, but it took two years to make it operational. Hence no one could blame the Germans for the famine or regard them as responsible for easing the disaster's consequences.

This would change after the arrival of the Belgians. They came with larger detachments, imposed their own rules and administrative structures and together with the power they took over, created the impression of being responsible for the country in a new way, no Rwandan king had done so far. They tried to replace traditional healers with medics and rituals with drugs, they fought cattle diseases with vaccination and droughts by imposing water retention. And they reacted to famines in a way that was very different from the ways the king had responded in the past.

145 Dufays, Félix: „Die Schrecken der Hungersnot“. *Afrika-Bote* März 1906, 170–171. Dufays was a White Father from Luxemburg.

146 One such account can be found in *Afrika-Bote*, 10. Jahrgang 1904, 176.

The Rumanura famine¹⁴⁷

During the war, neither Belgians nor Germans drafted Rwandans into their armies. The Belgian Askari came from the Belgian Congo, the German Askari came mostly from Tanganyika, with only a few auxiliary troops from Rwanda. Their number is unknown and their contribution to the German war effort difficult to assess. Musinga was undoubtedly pro-German, mainly because of his bad memories of the Belgian incursion into Kinyaga 20 years earlier and his gratitude for the German assistance in extending the court's power to the north. He was ready to support the German war effort with workers who could dig trenches, help erect fences and walls, and with food supplies, which *abatutsi* chiefs collected from their underlings.¹⁴⁸ Protestant priests confirmed Musinga's support for the German war effort in their letters and publications, often with exaggeration.¹⁴⁹ Some of them were so impressed by Musinga's support (or their own wishful thinking) they considered a Belgian invasion completely unrealistic, because all the Rwandans would rise against them.¹⁵⁰ For Rwanda's peasant population, Musinga's pro-German stance was tantamount to strong coercion to deliver their services and food to the German army and their auxiliary troops and hence meant more work, less food and less time to care for their homesteads and crops than in peacetime.¹⁵¹ Before the war, the Germans had started to collect taxes which, in the absence of money in Rwanda, Rwandans could pay in kind. The German troops had enough reserves and because they were relatively

147 The word is the noun from the verb *kumanura* and describes "something that takes you down".

148 He explained his attitude towards Germany in a long letter quoted in Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 293.

149 The Protestant missions in Rwanda (outside Gisaka) were usually from Germany and many of the missionaries were drafted into the German army in 1914. The transnational White Fathers were much more reluctant towards the German war effort and the Germans suspected them of delivering intelligence to the Belgians on the Western side of the Kivu shore. The war issues of the "Nachrichten aus der ostafrikanischen Mission" between 1914 and 1916 allow to reconstruct the Protestant view on the war quite well. For the White Fathers, see Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 299–300 and Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda 1900–1990*. Paris: Karthala 1999, 166–170.

150 Mkoma Mbuli (a Protestant monthly from Usumbara, here the issue from August 1914), as quoted in "Kriegsausgabe der Nachrichten aus der ostafrikanischen Mission", April 1915, Nr. 2–4, 31.

151 Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, 283–290.

small and paid for their food, their presence was not much of an annoyance to Rwandans.¹⁵² In addition, the Germans had developed a transport system which minimized their porters' efforts and did not require them to leave their home region.¹⁵³ They left their luggage to the local hill chief, requesting him to bring it to the next one on their way. The chief would then recruit porters, who did the job unpaid, but at the same time had little to do, because their task was only to bring the barter to the next hill chief, who would take care of it. Porters did not need to leave their environment, did not need to organize their return home, and did not have to carry the luggage for a long time. This snowball system didn't deprive the hill chiefs of their *abagaragu*' workforce for more than a few hours.¹⁵⁴

Once the war extended to Rwanda, there were no combat zones like in Europe, with stalemates lasting for months, large armies sieging each other, and armed vehicles ravaging the landscape. It started with Germans taking over Ijwi Island and bombing Goma, followed by Belgian incursions from the other side of the border in Bugoyi, undertaken by relatively large Askari units under Belgian officers.

Because much of the fighting was small-scale partisan-like warfare, the Germans often ordered a razing of sorghum and banana plants to prevent enemies from hiding there.¹⁵⁵ The northern region of Bugoyi, Rwanda's most fertile part, suffered the most from these measures. Nevertheless, the impact of the German defence on agricultural production was rather modest. It may have triggered regional food shortages, but no large-scale famine. Due to its fertile soil and its access to water, Bugoyi produced food surpluses. When there was a lack of food, the inhabitants of Bugoyi would either travel south and find food there, traders would bring in food from other parts of the country not hit by the famine and,

152 There seems to be quite a difference between missionary sources and German records on the one hand and oral testimonies from Rwandans on the other hand. The latter contain a lot of stories about German soldiers confiscating food and recruiting porters by force. See: Kabagema, Innocent: *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft 1899–1916*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 1993, 286–290 (based on oral accounts and partly also on the diaries of the White Father congregation in Rulindo).

153 Trader caravans used to hire porters for longer routes, which required the porters to leave their country.

154 Mibilizi Mission Diary 21.6.1904, Archive des Pères Blancs (further: APB) Rome (about the Germans' porter system).

155 De Lacger, Louis: *Le Ruanda moderne*, Namur: Grands Lacs 1939, 125–126 and Nsengimana, Innocent: *Le Rwanda et le pouvoir européen (1894–1954), quelles mutations?* Frankfurt/Main et al: Peter Lang, 415.

in the worst case, food prices on the markets would rise. Bugoyi was also famous for the production of bracelets, which were sold to other parts of the country and could compensate for food imports. One mustn't forget Bugoyi's transnational trade connections: caravans passed through the landscape with imported meat from Mutara and the neighbouring British and Belgian borderland.¹⁵⁶ During the decades before World War I, famines had been limited to certain parts of the country, but had never spread across the entire territory, because Bugoyi's surpluses compensated for shortages in other regions. In 1916, this mechanism broke down because disaster hit Bugoyi directly. This was because of the fighting and peasants abandoning their huts and families, but also because the Belgian troops were much bigger than the German ones and therefore needed more food and porters. They were also much more ruthless towards the locals. When they made incursions into Rwanda, they confiscated the cattle from the hills for their provisions before returning to their bases.

When their withdrawal started, the German officers no longer needed to consider the local people's feelings and interests; the Germans could be quite sure that they would not return to rule. In addition, they had a lot more transport needs then. The mission diaries reveal that sometimes several thousands of people left with the German troops, carrying their food, equipment, and private belongings. These columns used the mission stations as staging posts, where they expected to receive food supplies and could spend the night.¹⁵⁷ This soon became strenuous for the missions, which had to order food from the local chiefs, who confiscated it from their clients. The system put the heaviest burden on the weakest, it drained the food from the peasants to the soldiers, with the missionaries and the chiefs siphoning away their part on the way. Thus, neither chiefs nor missionaries nor soldiers had to starve, but the peasants did. This decreased the food supply even further. Prices went up and attracted traders with cash reserves, who bought the food only to sell it later at much higher prices. Soon, the markets lacked food. The vast number of subsistence farmers, who only had their own production to feed their families, came under huge pressure.¹⁵⁸

156 Lugan, Bernard: "Causes et effets de la famine 'Rumanura' au Rwanda 1916–18". *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, vol. 10 no. 2, 1976, 347–356.

157 Diaire de Issavi (Save), Mai 1916, APB Rome.

158 The authors of the Belgian administrative reports admitted how much the requisition of food for troops had contributed to the famine, Bibliothèque Africaine (BA), *Rapport sur l'administration belge des territoires occupés de l'est-africain allemand et spécialement*

And then the Belgians came. In a country where many porters and provisions had already left with the Germans, the Belgian troops' mere presence drew many men away from agricultural production and increased the demand for food. In addition, the Belgians were not just passing, they stayed. They set the porters free after some time so that they could return to their huts and fields¹⁵⁹, but this made the huge demand for food for the Congolese Askari and the Belgian officers permanent. The Belgian troops, for whom Rwanda was a foreign and initially even a hostile territory, tended to loot, rape, and destroy at wish, a fact which the Belgians recognized in their communication with Musinga when he complained about it.¹⁶⁰

In 1917, the British demanded food deliveries and the necessary porters from Rwanda, and the Belgians recruited 2,000 people to bring the provisions to Kigoma. The rumours about so many young people going on a journey of no return to the British irritated the peasants around Butare, where the Belgians had established their main assembling point for the expedition to Kigoma.¹⁶¹ In November 1916, heavy rain exacerbated the war's impact on the population. The spread of human and cattle diseases like smallpox, dysentery, meningitis, and trypanosomiasis aggravated the situation even further.¹⁶² Around Kabgayi, a worm plague attacked beans and sweet potatoes.¹⁶³

The consequences were dramatic. Poorer people left Bugoyi for other regions, selling their labour force for food, others started to sell their poorer and weaker relatives to slave traders or sent their children to wealthier families, hoping these would use them as workers and feed them. There was a tradition in Rwanda of sending children off to work for families who were better off, these would then pay the sending family with food, while the children would go back home before reaching sexual maturity. Thanks to their return, their family would be able to obtain the dowry for their girls and to build an alliance with the father-in-law's

du Ruanda et de l'Urundi, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies. 1920–21, Bruxelles: M. Hayez, imprimeur de la Chambre des Représentants, 1921, 4.

159 But many porters who had crossed from the Belgian Congo with the Belgian troops then went back to their huts in the Belgian colony and did not reinforce agricultural production in Rwanda.

160 Rumiya, Jean: *Le Rwanda sous le régime du mandat belge (1916–1931)*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan 1992, 30. Mibilizi Mission Diary 21.6.1904, APB Rome (about the Germans' porter system).

161 Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 66–67.

162 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 138–139.

163 Lugan, *Causes et effets*, 353.

family. During Rumanura, starving families started kidnapping children from weaker and poorer families, to pretend they were their own and to pawn them to those who could provide them with food.¹⁶⁴ Cattle died in large numbers, depriving even the richer *abatutsi* of parts of their wealth. In the northern regions of Bugoyi and Mutara, where strong *abahutu* lineages contested *abatutsi* rule, many *abatusi* left for relatives or possessions they held in other parts of the country. Their departure left their farms and pastures unattended and in decay, a situation that emboldened *abahutu* clans more and more. There are no holistic statistics about the number of fatalities which can be ascribed to the famine; when the Belgians arrived, they did not even have reliable population statistics.¹⁶⁵ The missionaries and nuns of Nyundo had left their mission station during the famine. When they came back in March 1917, they found corpses lying on the roads, some fresh, others already decomposed. In December, the situation worsened to the extent that the Belgian administration in Gisenyi saw itself forced to impose an eight days' prison term on farmers whose fields were covered with corpses they had failed to bury immediately. When Léon-Paul Classe, the founder of the Nyundo mission station, returned to his workplace in March (while the famine was still ongoing), he realized that only a small part of the families living on the eleven hills around the mission station were still there. The others had fled or died.¹⁶⁶ Under the Belgians' pressure Musinga distributed more land to peasants, allowing them to cultivate land reserves in swamps¹⁶⁷, and lowered their compulsory workload from *uburetwa*, so that they could use more time to produce more food. The Belgians started to distribute food through

164 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 139–140.

165 Reyntjens, Filip: *Pouvoir et Droit au Rwanda. Droit public et évolution politique, 1916–1973*. Tervuren: Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, 1985, 21. The Belgian census, carried out at the end of 1918 and hence after the famine, found only 343,085 inhabitants, and among them 124,733 taxpayers. The basis for Reyntjens numbers is unclear. BA, *Rapport sur l'administration belge du Ruanda et de l'Urundi pendant l'année 1921*, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies. 1922, Bruxelles: Goemaere, Imprimerie du Roi 1922, 26.

166 Father Peter Schumacher in Rwaza mission station also mentioned the impact of the famine on the surrounding hills in his letters to Belgian outposts and resident Declerck in Kigali, see his letter from 13.11.1917 (to Gahinga outpost) and 6.12.1917 (to Kigali) in Archiv der Afrikamissionare, Missio Aachen (further Mission Aachen), Sammlung P. Schumacher.

167 *Abatutsi* used these swamps as pastures during the dry seasons and grew sweet potatoes there when they were humid. Lugan, *Causes et effets*, 355–356.

the mission stations and launched a vaccination campaign.¹⁶⁸ When in October 1917 the Resident in Kitega ordered the commanders in the different districts to report on the political situation, most of them claimed the most recent harvests had been good and that starvation had ended.¹⁶⁹ But the disaster did not end there: after the famine, Rwanda experienced a deadly spread of cerebrospinal meningitis which caused many casualties among the population weakened by smallpox¹⁷⁰, and then in 1918–1919, the Spanish Flu ravaged the country, “the most murderous one ever recalled”, as the Belgian report to the League of Nations stated.¹⁷¹ These catastrophes left a lasting imprint on Rwandan society. According to the first report which the Belgian administration published, the country had one and a half million inhabitants when the Belgian army arrived. In 1920, hence after Rumanura and the epidemic, the country had approximately one million inhabitants.¹⁷²

The escape of many *abatutsi* cattle holders from the North and the death or impoverishment of vulnerable *abahutu* families had widened the cleavage between the wealthy and the poor and, at the same time, emboldened many Northern Hutu *amazu*, equalling them to the modest part of the *abatutsi*. Among the latter, many had lost their cattle, either because they had to sell or kill their herds, or because the animals had died from diseases, lowering their owners’ social status.

The famine also bolstered the White Fathers’ influence as translators and mediators between the Belgians, the hill chiefs, and the court and as the suppliers of storage points for food and vaccines during *Rumanura*. For the Belgian administration, the famine also offered some new opportunities. Belgium began emphasizing its relief actions during the famine, expecting them to contribute

168 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 144.

169 Archives Africaines (further AA), Brussels, RWA 88 (1917), Rapport politique du mois d’août 1917.

170 Missio Aachen, Archiv der Afrikamissionare, Sammlung Schumacher, Letter from P. Schumacher to Resident Declerck in Kigali, Rwaza 6.12.1917,

171 Bibliothèque Africaine (further BA), Brussels, *Rapport sur l’administration belge des territoires occupés de l’est-africain allemand et spécialement du Ruanda et de l’Urundi*, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies. 1920–21, Bruxelles: M. Hayez, imprimeur de la Chambre des Représentants 1921, 28.

172 BA, *Rapport sur l’administration belge des territoires occupés de l’est-africain allemand et spécialement du Ruanda et de l’Urundi*, présenté aux chambres par le Ministre des Colonies. 1920–21, Bruxelles: M. Hayez, imprimeur de la Chambre des Représentants 1921, 4–5.

to the legitimacy of its rule in Rwanda, which was still precarious and in urgent need of international recognition.

Some authors have interpreted the Belgian efforts to address the famine by pointing to the administration's alleged will to solve the social tensions in Rwanda. But the concessions for peasants were not attempts to go against social injustice and *abatutsi* exploitation of *abahutu*.¹⁷³ When the Belgians eased the fate of the *abahutu*, they still hoped to swap Rwanda and Urundi for territory from Britain and Portugal. Enforcing social reform and changing the relationship between what they regarded as ethnic or racial groups was neither in their interest nor admissible under international law. Allegiance to the latter would be quite important to convince the other European powers to agree to leave Urundi and Rwanda in Belgian hands and to accept the envisaged land swap. To prove how well they ran the country, how well they controlled it, and how satisfied the locals were with their now rulers¹⁷⁴, the Belgian administration launched a large-scale opinion poll. The results were hardly surprising and not at all open-ended. Respondents apparently knew what the administration expected them to answer and when they didn't, the interviewers knew how to suggest the appropriate answer.¹⁷⁵ And so, the local chiefs emphasized how much they loved the Belgians for coping with the famine and why they were much better rulers than the British and the Germans. Belgian diplomats presented these results at the Paris peace talks as proof that the territory should remain in Belgian hands; the survey could also bolster arguments for annexing the occupied territories rather than installing a League of Nations-centred system of mandates, which would require the colonial powers to report their conduct.¹⁷⁶

173 Des Forges, who neglected the international aspects almost entirely, sees many of the famine-fighting measures, which favoured the interests of *abahutu*, as social reforms and the consequence of the Belgians' will to lower the burden of the *abatutsi* exploitation of *abahutu*, Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 144.

174 An uprising would have shed a rather negative light on the Belgians in terms of „effective control” as well as in terms of being good governors.

175 Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, 49–58 and Nsengimana, *Le Rwanda*, 422–426 discuss these polls extensively.

176 While the US government preferred a mandated system, France was in favour of annexation which would not put the annexed territories under the supervision of others. Vijgen, Ingeborg: *Tussen mandaat en kolonie. Rwanda, Burundi en het Belgische bestuur in opdracht van de Volkenbond (1916–1932)*, Leuven: Acco 2005, 89. On the discussion about annexation versus mandates see Vijgen, *Tussen mandaat en kolonie* 113–117.

From an ex-post perspective and from today's point of view about the methodology of opinion polls, the entire exercise was ridiculous, but it had an important by-product which would later backfire at the Belgians and other colonial centres that took the same path: It conceded agency to the colonized population and its leaders giving them an (often distorted and manipulated) voice, and it made the legitimacy of colonialism contingent on the support of the colonized.¹⁷⁷ The Rwandans had not requested for the Belgians to root their rule's legitimacy in popular support for it, it was the Belgians who made that argument. During the famine, they had taken responsibility, they had started to take measures against future famines and by doing they, they had left no doubts about their role, the role of the colonial state: from then onward, the state – rather than the rainmakers – was expected to prevent famines and to deal with its consequences. This became even more apparent with the next famine.

The Rwakayihura famine

The famine was the result of the contradictory Belgian development goals and shows quite well how the wish to produce more cash crops, the country's population density, and the already existing ecological problems triggered a major disaster. Gisaka, the part of Rwanda that had temporarily been under British rule, was vulnerable for two main reasons: Migration to British colonies had deprived it of a large part of its peasants and intensive agriculture had exhausted the soil and lowered the water level. To counter that, the Belgians promoted the cultivation of manioc, which could serve as a food reserve, because maniocs could remain in the ground for several years without decaying. However, this meant the cattle holders would lose pastures or even would even need to diminish the size of their prestigious and valuable herds.¹⁷⁸ The worker emigration to the Eastern Congo further aggravated the situation, when Congo started to import food for its workers from Rwanda. At the end of the 1920s, about 50,000 men from Rwanda emigrated temporarily for work to Uganda and Tanganyika, because of the higher wages and lower taxes there.¹⁷⁹

177 At more or less the same time as in Rwanda, the British authorities elaborated their Blue Book on German atrocities during the German wars against the Nama and Herero in German South West Africa with the aim of bolstering the demands of stripping the Germans of their colony and handing it over to the Union of South Africa. The Blue Book also consisted of a collection of interviews with Herero and Nama leaders.

178 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 220–222.

179 These numbers are based on British statistics, they do not include emigration to the Belgian Congo. Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 228.

In 1928, the drought transformed into a catastrophe when people started to die from starvation and thirst in large numbers.¹⁸⁰ Contemporary reports about the catastrophe resemble those from the Rumanura famine a generation earlier. They mostly stem from the diary of a Protestant pastor, John Edward Church, one of the initiators of the East African Revival who had settled in Gisaka and observed the famine as an eyewitness, alarming European public opinion about it.¹⁸¹ “One cannot go far in any direction without seeing corpses dying by the roadside”, he wrote. Patients crawled to his hospital from the adjacent hills. Press coverage, based on his testimony, put pressure on the Belgian administration, which started to buy food in Urundi and distribute it in Gisaka and the surrounding regions affected by the disaster.¹⁸²

The interplay of the various man-made and natural factors that had triggered the catastrophe was absent from the official Belgian reports. They reduced the reasons for the disaster to three: lack of rain and natives’ superstition and inertia. Food taboos had prevented Rwandans from switching to available food (like fish, game, and poultry) when their traditional dishes had become unavailable, and an *umuhutu* had spread the rumour about a woman with supernatural abilities that had risen from the Mohasi lake, whose followers would miraculously see sorghum growing on their fields.¹⁸³

The famine had far-reaching consequences for the population and for colonial policies. It drove tens of thousands (this estimation is rather modest) to the north of Rwanda and to Uganda, disrupted families and strengthened the Belgians’ grip on Rwandan society. The Belgian reports claimed that many men left their families behind and emigrated to the north. They might as well have tried to get food there, but failed to bring it back to their families. British statistics show an increase of emigration to British territories after the famine which might be the consequence of

180 One can translate the Kinyarwanda term *Rwakayihura* as “the great thirst” or the “thirst wave”.

181 Church, John Edward: *Quest for the Highest. An Autobiographical Account of the East African Revival*. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1981.

182 Newbury, David: “The *Rwakayihura* Famine of Rwanda 1928–29 in Eastern Rwanda. A nexus of colonial rule.” In: Nsabimana, Tharcisse (ed): *L’histoire sociale de l’Afrique de l’Est*. Bujumbura, Paris: Karthala CCB 1991, 269–285.

183 L’administration belge du Ruanda-Urundi pendant l’année 1929, présenté aux chambres, M. le Premier Ministre, Ministre des Colonies, Bruxelles: établissement Emile Bruylant 1930, 80–81.

such behaviour: the surviving families joined the men after the famine had ended.¹⁸⁴ In 1931, many of those who had left to British territories, returned and were settled in labour camps erected at the newly built Kakitumba bridge at the border.¹⁸⁵ But this also means that the famine aggravated one of the factors that had contributed to it: more and more peasants left Rwanda. To prevent future famines, the Belgian administration tightened its grip on the remaining peasants, forcing them to grow drought-resistant crops and participate in the building of infrastructure. More roads and bridges were not only necessary to integrate Rwanda into the Belgian colonial economy and to create surpluses, but they were also necessary for delivering food stocks more quickly from fertile to arid regions during droughts.¹⁸⁶ In its reports, the Belgian administration claimed it had replaced only chiefs who had not responded to the crises or done so too late and too leniently. But the administrative reshuffle which followed the famine led to a radical centralization of power, the replacement of many *abahutu* chiefs by *abatutsi* and cemented the preponderance of Catholicism among the customary elites.

Table 1: Centralization and Catholic influence in Rwanda's colonial bureaucracy¹⁸⁷

Year	Number of chiefs	Percentage of Catholics	Number of sub-chiefs	Percentage of Catholics ¹⁸⁸
1933	65		1043	
1936	69	78%	900	84%
1938	56	91%	860	84%
1947	51	94%	625	88%
1957	45		559	

184 Immigration to British territories increased from 46,000 in 1927–28 to 100,000 in 1936–38. Newbury, David: 'The Rwakayihura Famine of Rwanda 1928–29 in Eastern Rwanda. A nexus of colonial rule.' In: Nsabimana, T. (ed): *L'histoire sociale de l'Afrique de l'Est*. Bujumbura, Paris: Karthala CCB 1991, 276; Chrétien, Jean-Pierre. "Des sédentaires devenus migrants." *Cultures et développement* 10.1, 1978, 71–101.

185 Correspondence between the British district commissioner in Kigezi and the resident from February 1931 in AA RWA 352 (1930–31).

186 Newbury, *The Rwakayihura Famine*, 269–285.

187 Own calculations based on Reyntjens, *Pouvoir et droit*, 122–125.

188 Chiefs other than Catholics were mostly either pagans (which, in the language of the Belgian administration, meant followers of Kubandwa and other African traditional beliefs) or Protestants and Adventists, Reyntjens, *Pouvoir et droit*, 125.

In the internal struggle for the reform, the White Fathers took the side of *abatutsi* dominance and opposed plans of the governor to give chieftainships to *abahutu* in the northern regions. Léon-Paul Classe, who was appointed bishop in 1922, saw the *abatutsi* as the natural ruling class and linked any attempt to undermine their dominance as a menace to the stability of the country, which would open the door to chaos and even “communism”. The colonial administration followed Classe’s line and later authors have often seen Classe’s intervention as crucial in what they called the “tutsification” of governance.¹⁸⁹ The colonial authorities always had a sympathetic ear for Classe’s advice and recommendations, in some cases they had asked him to refute criticism against the colonial administration vis-a-vis the colonial ministry¹⁹⁰, and his intervention favouring the ruling elite might well have influenced the decision-making process in the government. Nevertheless, the expansion of the wealthy *abatutsi* lineages into the colonial bureaucracy and the further marginalization of *abahutu* and *abatwa* cannot be attributed to the intrigues and antics of one person; it was a social development with much deeper roots. By inextricably linking Catholicism and education with upward social mobility in the colonial bureaucracy, the Belgian administration created a mechanism of social hegemony which the wealthier *abatutsi* could use more easily than any other group to entrench and expand their power over the rest of the population. Thanks to mass conversion and by sending their children into the colonial school system, they took advantage of it and helped create a new social stratum of young, Europeanized, and Catholic clerks, who would soon gain power over the older traditional (and often illiterate) chiefs in the countryside. These young, educated, affluent men became the Rwandan counterparts of the *evolués* in the Belgian Congo.¹⁹¹ The nexus between education, Catholicism and power in the colonial bureaucracy reshuffled the balance of power among the ruling elite, opening the door to power and wealth for families and lineages

189 Gatwa, Tharcisse: *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises, 1900–1994*. Oxford: Oxford Center for Mission Studies 2005, 87. Linden, too, is hesitant about the agency some other authors ascribe to Classe in this matter, Linden, *Christianisme et Pouvoir* au Rwanda, Paris: Karthala 1999, 218–220.

190 When in 1924, a former administrator criticized the governor’s policy in Rwanda in a report to the colonial ministry, the resident in Kigali responded with a refutation written by Classe. AA RWA 87, Liasse 3.

191 While the notion of *evolué* became very popular in the Congolese context, it was hardly ever used in the Rwandan context. Des Forges instead used the Kinyarwanda word *abakarani* to describe them. Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 211–213 and 222–226.

outside the court elite. Thanks to education, some young men from poorer *abatusi* lineages could catch up or even overtake their competitors from well-born lineages, whose leaders were more reluctant towards European education and Catholicism.

The lessons from Rwakayihura were clearer and more compelling than from Rumanura: the Belgians had not only taken responsibility for the famine, they even had fired many chiefs and replaced them by others. The exodus to Uganda already demonstrated: this had failed to bolster the Belgians' legitimacy as rulers of the country.

World War II and the Great Ruzagayura Famine

During World War II, Rwanda did not send soldiers to the front¹⁹², but it strongly contributed to the allied war effort and the defeat of Nazi Germany, even though it was ruled by a country under German occupation. This paradox is due to a deep conflict in Belgian politics whose roots stretch back to the debate about the meaning of geopolitical neutrality and the attitude of King Leopold III towards Germany. When the German army invaded Belgium in May 1940, pushing the French, Belgian and British troops back to the Channel, the Belgian government under prime minister Hubert Pierlot escaped first to Paris and then, after the French surrender, to London, while Leopold III decided to stay with the army and to surrender. Suspicions he would establish a collaboration government were not entirely unfounded; he later met with Hitler and tried to convince him of a Vichy-like solution for Belgium but failed. His decision to stay and go (rather symbolically) into German captivity dug a deep cleavage between him and his followers in Belgium, the Belgian government in exile in London and those Belgians, who had managed to escape to France, eager to resume the fight against Germany. During the years to come, not only the Belgian diplomats abroad but also the administration of the Belgian Congo, Rwanda and Urundi were under strong pressure from the government in exile and the King to take sides in the conflict.¹⁹³ But because the government in exile had access to British and colonial resources, while the King had next to none and Germany never managed to take over one of the Belgian colonies, the mines, the plantations,

192 The League of Nation's B mandate banned the recruitment of soldiers by colonial centers for the fight against other European countries.

193 Stengers, Jean: *Léopold III et le gouvernement. Les deux politiques belges de 1940*. Bruxelles: Racines 2002. The King's surrender and his politics during the German occupation caused a major domestic conflict after the war, which triggered his abdication. Witte, Els; Crayebeckx, Jan and Meynen, Alan: *Politieke geschiedenis van België van 1830 tot heden*. Antwerpen: Standard Uitgeverij 2018, 246–251.

the manufactures, and the agriculture remained under the control of the government in exile. Its position was precarious and dependent on the Belgian war effort outside the country and its contribution to the British war economy. This put a lot of pressure on the colonial administration and on the population of the colonies.

The socio-economic system the Belgians had built after the end of military rule in Rwanda was characterized by violence and pressure. It consisted of a lot of sticks and much fewer carrots. Under the premises of indirect rule, the colonial administration would put pressure on the *umwani* and the chiefs and they would pass the pressure downwards. Both the Belgians and the chiefs applied violence in the process, including flogging, beating, and throwing reluctant farmers and disobeying taxpayers into prison. The system was arbitrary, as Mamdani rightly states, and it enabled every chief and sub-chief between the peasants and the colonial administration to skim off some of the contributions they had to require from their underlings.¹⁹⁴ But this was not new, that is how the *igikingi* system and *sebuja-umugaragu* relations had worked. Violence was prevalent before the war, too and the intermediaries who collected contributions had always taken their share before passing them further up. The difference to former times was only at the helm: the stream of contributions the chiefs shovelled away from the peasants ended up in the hands of the Belgians, not in the hands of the *Mwani*. The situation on the ground remained unchanged.

But during the war, the pressure rose. The administration demanded more forced labour, more workers, but paid as much as before, while it channeled more and more crops and food out of the country and to the Allied armies. The Belgians implemented this policy under extremely malicious circumstances. Due to droughts, harvests had remained about 40 percent below the usual level during the years preceding 1943 – and in 1943, rain was insufficient again in Rwanda and Urundi and the rainfall during the long rain season came too late.¹⁹⁵ Later, when the whole disaster became apparent, the Belgian administration tried to blame the *umwani* for allegedly not having informed them about the coming catastrophe and the king denied these accusations.¹⁹⁶ But in the light of

194 Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, New York, London: Princeton University Press 2020, 94–96.

195 Singiza, Dantès: “La famine Ruzagayura (Rwanda, 1943–1944): Causes, conséquences et réactions des autorités.” Tervuren: Musée royale de l’Afrique centrale 2011, 32–33.

196 AA RWA 8 (5) Dossier Mwani Rudahigwa, Letters exchanged between the *Umwani* and the Resident, famine de 1943–1944.

the available archival records in the Belgian colonial archives, there can be no doubt: the Belgians knew what was coming thanks to their own sources, from alerts from the missionaries and from the *umwani* (who had less control of the situation than the missionaries and the administration).¹⁹⁷ The drought lasted – with some regional exceptions – until November. Stocks were empty, the plants dried up and more and more people, anticipating a famine, escaped to neighbouring countries.

Under these circumstances, Governor Pierre Ryckmans urged Rwandans “to work a lot more to meet the needs of the army”, and Mutara Rudahigwa seconded him calling on his people “to help the government in the war”.¹⁹⁸ Working for the liberation of Belgium from German rule did not necessarily mean working in Rwanda. The administration recruited thousands of young Rwandans to the mines in the Congolese provinces of Costermansville and Katanga, where they extracted wolframite, tantalite, and gold or worked as porters. Agriculture no longer served to feed the population and export surpluses, but also to sustain the mine workers and the Belgian army. Coffee beans were manufactured into oil for army engines, and in the north the pyrethrum flowers delivered repellents against anopheles mosquitoes. The Belgians sent the repellent to their soldiers who fought in Malaria-infested territories. The pyrethrum plantation gained notoriety, because it predominantly employed children who ceased to go to school. It was a scheme which demonstrated the inhumane interplay between bureaucratic colonialism and the system of traditional customs and habits in Rwanda. The chiefs and sub-chiefs sent the children of the *abagaragu* to the plantation, while cashing in the whole or predominant part of their salary. The plantation owner, a Belgian company, turned a blind eye to the scheme, because the children worked for much lower remuneration than adult workers would get. The whole affair came to the fore, because the missionaries saw their pupils vanishing from the lectures and some of the chiefs (most probably those who did not earn money from the scheme) informed the *umwani*.¹⁹⁹ But for the adults, the new rigor was tough, too. Some workers had to leave their huts in the middle of the night to reach their workplaces to perform the *akazi*, the additional work for the war effort, which a regulation from 1940 required. Instead of the 25 days per year

197 The respective records are held in AA RA/RU 75/9, 79/9, 34, 58/8, AI 1424, RWA 426, 427.

198 Singiza, *La famine*, 37.

199 Singiza, *La famine*, 38–40 and Nyundo Mission Diary 1943, APB Rome and Nyundo Mission Diary of the White Sisters of Kivu/Nyundo, November 1943, ASB Rome.

of communal work, they had to work 60 days at a plantation, “which the governor regards as crucial for the war”.²⁰⁰ Reluctant workers could lose their plots, and chiefs, whose underlings did not perform, were replaced by more loyal ones. Resistance entailed corporal punishment, a fine, or prison. Under the conditions of war, an oppressive system became even more oppressive. The consequences were disastrous: the farmers had to leave their plots to do compulsory work for the chiefs, the plantations, and even the mission stations. The Belgians recruited more and more Rwandans as workers for the mines in Eastern Congo and more and more young Rwandans tried to evade the tax burden and the compulsory workload by emigrating to British-held Uganda, where wages were higher and the treatment better. Rural households were deserted, and their owners abandoned their crops and failed to sow. And then the first people dying of starvation started to appear at the mission stations and the offices of the territorial administrators. The famine spread all over the country (only Cyangugu remained untouched), but its name was different across the regions – another indication of the lack of communication and a shared identity among ordinary Rwandans.²⁰¹

Ordinary Rwandans’ incredulity about the point of the Belgian measures was hardly surprising: among the political leadership, among the chiefs (which all stemmed from influential *abatutsi* lineages) the memory of German rule was still vivid and they associated it much more positively than Belgian rule. The hardship during the war intensified these warm feelings for Germany even more, especially among that part of the court notables who had never accepted Musinga’s unseating and still regarded him as the legitimate ruler of the kingdom. Germany had made some efforts during the 1920s to bolster Musinga’s self-confidence *vis-à-vis* the Belgians by passing messages to him about their imminent return to Rwanda after the end of the French occupation of the Ruhr region. France and Belgium would withdraw from all territories they had taken over from Germany, a new war would start in Europe, and the Germans would return to Rwanda and chase away the Belgians. When the Belgian administration became aware of the German agent who spread this rumor, they deported him together with his quite impressive archive.²⁰²

After Musinga’s removal, there still was a pro-German faction among the notables yearning for a German return. According to Kagame, Musinga was well

200 Ordonnance législative n. 112 du 11.6.1940, Bulletin Officiel du Ruanda/Urundi.

201 Singiza, *La famine*, 47–52 provides the different names people gave to the famine.

202 AA RWA 1 (11), several reports from early 1924. The name of the agent was Lodes and the Belgians suspected him of being a member of a German colonial lobby.

informed about everything that happened in Nyanza even when he was under house arrest at Kemembe. He also obtained gifts from his followers there – mainly through petty traders who also passed messages about politics to him. The pro-German feelings among notables became so strong the Belgians felt inclined to forbid the use of the words “Hitler” and “Germany”, which in turn inclined the pro-German Musinga loyalists to replace them with similar sounding words. The Belgian government, weary of possible pro-German riots, ultimately deported Musinga to the Belgian Congo in 1940.²⁰³

Doubts about the point of working in Rwanda for the Belgian war effort in Europe were not limited to the notables. In Nyamasheke, the territorial administrator sent people to a brick factory “to support the war effort”. After hearing about it, the local sub-chief asked a missionary whether the Belgian army is going to kill *les boches* by throwing bricks at them.²⁰⁴

The chiefs’ reaction to the famine varied. Some distributed their stocks to their people, continued to impose pressure and violence, and confiscated the remaining foodstuff from their households; others asked the missionaries for their stocks, some even escaped to neighbouring countries, abandoning their underlings. Soon there were corpses lying along the roads, in front of the missions, and in the villages, whole regions were deserted. At Nyundo, the White Sisters noted, “every day we have starving people, walking skeletons on the street whom we cannot help”.²⁰⁵

The consequences of the famine were dire and differed much from the ones during World War I. According to vice-governor general Eugène Jungers, who conducted his own inquiry into the disaster, Rwanda lost 36,000 lives due to the famine. That is also the number of casualties the ministry for the colonies published later in its report. In 1944, the German defeat was close, but the League of Nations (from which the Belgians had obtained the mandate to rule Rwanda and Urundi) did not exist anymore and no one could know whether the United Nations, which the Allied powers were planning to create, would confirm Belgium’s mandate over Rwanda-Urundi, and if yes, under which conditions. For the Belgian government, the famine was also a blow to its reputation as a colonial

203 Kagame, Alexis: *Un abrégé de l’ethno-histoire du Rwanda*. Butare: Éditions universitaires du Rwanda 1972, 196–197.

204 Singiza, *La famine*, 42. “Boches” was a popular invective for Germans in the French-speaking world, like “Kraut” in English.

205 Nyundo Mission Diary of the White Sisters of Kivu/Nyundo, November 1943, ASB Rome.

centre. Therefore, it is quite likely the administration downplayed the famine's victim numbers. Vice-governor Jungers, stationed in Bujumbura, travelled to Nyanza and Kabgayi at the end of October 1944 and discovered the existence of the famine with his own eyes, watching emaciated children and villagers on the streets and deriving information from the White Fathers in Kabgayi about the number of corpses they had buried so far. In a quick-tempered emotional outburst, Jungers accused the Resident, Jean Paradis, of having failed to inform him about the famine; he fired him and sent him to Urundi as a disciplinary measure. Paradis tried to shift the blame to Rudahigwa, accusing him of not having informed Paradis and complained of the alleged treason of his territorial administrators who had failed to report the famine victims in their regions. Jungers could present Paradis as his "scapegoat" (as Bourgeois later wrote) in Brussels and Paradis was later transferred to the Congo, where he became governor of the Kivu province.²⁰⁶

The UN later reported (without indicating the source) 50,000 famine victims. As usual in such cases, the number started to rise the more time went by. The White Fathers wrote about 300,000 fatalities and – what is just as important as the number of fatal victims – estimated the toll of those who had left Rwanda at 300,000, too. It is not known how many later returned to Rwanda. But the country to which they returned was no longer the same.

In 1917, the Belgians and the missionaries had appeared as saviors from a disaster which no one could be blamed for: the Germans had left, the Belgians had just arrived and no one expected the royal court to do more than to pray for rain and perform the usual rituals. Nevertheless, the Belgians managed to relieve a part of the population from the famine. In 1944, the Belgians had territorial offices in the whole country, they had an army, and a police force, they had a web of chiefs they had appointed all over the hills and by raising taxes, building infrastructure, imposing specific crops on the peasants, introducing cash crops and forcing people to do communal work, they had created the impression of controlling the situation. Christianization had discredited the traditional methods of dealing with droughts and famines and an increasingly rationalist attitude had replaced the old belief system based on rainmakers and the king's metaphysical skills. Instead of killing rainmakers, the survivors could only blame the Belgians, their king, and their chiefs, who all were *abatutsi*. For some odd reasons which

206 Singiza, *La famine*, 61–64; AA RWA 426 and 427 (for the correspondence between Paradis and Rudahigwa); Bourgeois, René: *Témoignages*. Tome 1, volume 2: fonctionnaire territorial (1931–1961), Tervuren: Musée royale de l'Afrique centrale 1982, 86–87.

do not transpire through the records, the Belgians were convinced only *abahutu* were hit by the famine. This is questionable, but because such disasters usually hit the wealthy harder than the poor and there were definitely more *abatutsi* than *abahutu* among Rwanda's wealthy, the famine was likely to deepen the cleavage between the two groups. A chief failing his clients during the famine certainly was an *umututsi* chief who had failed his *abahutu* clients. Thus, the famine also eroded the legitimacy and reputation of the customary authorities and the colonial system.

It also shattered social bonds across the country, severing lineage ties, ripping families apart, and forcing many households to emigrate. It weakened the mechanisms and norms regulating violence. During the famine, stealing food or even taking away crops from the fields had been very widespread, and peasants had reacted by killing the thieves on the spot. The lineage-related mechanisms to contain violence, which Czekanowski had described, were no longer in force.²⁰⁷ Peasants who killed thieves did not even hide their deeds, they boasted about it in public, exposing the corpses in front of the territorial administration, as one administrator, René Bourgeois, recalled in his memoir.²⁰⁸ Children, who stole food, had their hands burnt.²⁰⁹

During the war, the Belgians had stretched their workforce in Rwanda to the utmost, to the extent of making any public work, even if it was communal and its sense was to improve the infrastructure, a kind of serfdom in the eyes of the Rwandans who had to carry it out. Work for their chief, work for the village, paying taxes to a king or *shebuja* – they lumped it all together and despised it, as the territorial administrator for Nyanza wrote in an urgent reminder in 1947 to the Resident in Kigali. Even the obligation to grow cash crops and drought-resistant plants was regarded as a form of forced labour service and young people

207 These customary rules allowed people to arrest and punish thieves and to cut off their hands. They banned killing thieves (with the exception of cattle thieves) and envisaged complicated inter-lineage mechanisms to prevent revenge cycles across lineages and curb possible lineage-wars. Czekanowski, Jan: *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo-Zwischengebiet*. Leipzig 1911–1927; Bd. I, *Ethnographie. Zwischenseengebiet. Mpororo / Ruanda. Mit einem musikalischen Anhang von*. E. M. v. Hornbostel. Leipzig 1917, 237–238; Kagame, Alexis: *Les organisations socio-familiales de l'ancien Rwanda*. Bruxelles: Institut Royale Colonial Belge 1954, 79–80; [No author]: *Des coutumes du Ruanda ayant trait à la répression des crimes et délits ou au règlement des contestations civiles*, Archives Africaines, Brussels (further AA), RWA 108, Justice criminelle.

208 Bourgeois, *Témoignages I*, 79.

209 Singiza, *La famine*, 98.

emigrated *en masse* to Uganda to plant coffee there rather than stay in Rwanda. His territory, the administrator wrote, privileged and relatively wealthy as compared to more remote areas, was characterized by “a considerable increase of vagrancy, massive departures to Uganda, the dislocation of families, more or less grave social perturbations, all provoked by the imposition of labour services.” Until recently, 70 percent of those obliged to carry out individual and collective communal works had actually done so, the administrator argued. By 1947, this number had dropped to 30 percent. It had become impossible to carry out roadwork, fight against erosion and deforestation, and maintain the coffee plantations, because the workers had left for Uganda and only handicapped, elders, children, and wealthy *abatutsi* were left behind, and they were “inapt to carry out manual work”. “Even the indigenous chiefs, who reported to me about these issues, did not hide their fears about the country’s future.” They had come forward to propose a reform of the tax and labour system: the absentees and recalcitrant workers should be “heavily fined” and the money from the fines should be used to decently remunerate those who were willing to work. But for report’s author, the roots of these problems were deeper: Rwandans had finally cut ties with their traditional norms and values and adopted the Belgian way of mercantile thinking: they no longer did what tradition taught them, they did what they expected to be in their individual short-term material benefit. They challenged everything, from the traditional patron-client patterns to the system of dowry and marriage. There was no doubt: the country was in turmoil.²¹⁰

Disaster and legitimacy

In pre-colonial Rwanda, famines and other natural disasters could trigger social change, weaken the wealthy and rise the poorer (though hardly ever the poorest), they could reshuffle the balance of power among the most influential lineages, but they could not deprive the monarchy of its traditional legitimacy. Accountability for droughts and famines was with rainmakers and in the North with the local *abami*, but in the central kingdom, the kind did not fall because he had failed to prevent natural disasters. Guilt for those was externalized and the population used to scape-goat local rainmakers and chiefs, instead.

210 The report dates from 7.4.1947 and is stored in AA RWA 105. It seems the report was consulted with Rudahigwa, who delivered a Kinyarwanda list of the compulsory services Rwandans had to carry out under the existing system.

Colonial rule changed this state of affairs. By taking responsibility (but hardly living up to it) for moderating the consequences of natural disasters, the Belgian administration transformed the traditional system of governance's traditional legitimacy into output-legitimacy (the good ruler is one who solves problems rather than one who deserves to rule due to the custom). Unable to hold the Belgians accountable for their failure to prevent famines and soothe their consequences, Rwandans emigrated *en masse* to Uganda, disrupting family ties and traditional bonds. Forcing the population (and the chiefs) to extort labour and food for a war effort which remained incomprehensible to most Rwandans (if anybody had a political opinion about the war, it was a pro-German stance rather than one for the Allied war effort) and failing to deal with the ensuing famine in 1944, the Belgians undermined not only the legitimacy of their own rule, but also the legitimacy of the traditional system of governance's remnants, they had used to rule the country under indirect rule. This way, the rising expectations towards the state (its colonial as well as its traditional arm) and the failure to live up to them shattered the pillars of the system of governance already during the 1940s. Unable to change the political system, unable to hold the rulers accountable, to take revenge or resort to scape-goating, Rwandans emigrated in large numbers to the neighbouring countries, where they encountered other black Africans who had taken part in the war (and took pride in it, often having fought and won against white Europeans), pan-Africanist, anti-colonial and communist ideas and usually also more personal freedom than they had enjoyed in Rwanda. From this perspective, famines were more than just natural disasters; they were political, not only because the Belgians used them as arguments in political struggles, but mainly, because they had for-going political repercussions.

6. Paying for colonial atrocities. The paradoxical outcome and the unexpected adverse consequences of the German-Namibian settlement concerning the genocide against the Herero and Nama²¹¹

Introduction

In 2015 Germany and Namibia started to negotiate a settlement concerning German atrocities committed under colonial rule on the territory of what was then German South West Africa and is now Namibia.²¹² Since Namibia's declaration of independence from South Africa in 1990, Germany has been an important sponsor of development aid in Namibia, which became a major holiday destination for German tourists. In recent years, the German public has paid increasing attention to colonial issues. Namibia plays the most prominent role in these German discussions about how to deal with the colonial past, because it was Germany's only settler colony in Africa. The negotiations have triggered numerous legal and historical analyses which inquire about the character of these atrocities, their links with mass atrocities committed later by the Nazis in Central and Eastern Europe²¹³, the scope and limits of international litigation and the applicability of international law and international criminal law to

211 Research for this article was sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN grant no. 485447 2020/37/B/HS3/00643 ("Transnationalism and Colonialism. Settler communities in Southern Africa between NS-ideology and apartheid").

212 The territories of the German colony (in German: *Schutzgebiet* or "protection territory") German South-West Africa and today's Namibia do not entirely overlap. At the time of German rule, Walvis Bay was a British port, which was run by South Africa after Germany had lost the colony in World War I. South Africa returned the port city to Namibia in 1994.

213 Zimmerer, Jürgen (ed): *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust*, (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2011); Madley, Benjamin: "From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South-West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe", *European History Quarterly*, 35, 3 (2005), 429–464; critically about these theses: Zollmann, Jakob: "From Windhuk to Auschwitz – old wine in new bottles?", *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 14

events which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century.²¹⁴ There are also analyses which examine whether and eventually how litigation contributes to historical distortions.²¹⁵ Many articles and books considered the Namibian (and respectively the Nama and Herero) claims against Germany, and whether these are substantiated in international law²¹⁶, whether the atrocities fulfil the requirements of the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide²¹⁷, whether Germany is legally accountable for atrocities committed by the German Empire and whether Namibia is a legal successor to the victims of the German atrocities.²¹⁸ Under pressure from ethnic constituencies in Namibia, international media coverage and public opinion in Germany, Germany's political establishment has slowly moved from denialist positions, which downplayed or ignored the scholarly and media debate about colonial atrocities, to an acceptance of the genocide label to characterise the colonial-era atrocities. And thus, a settlement with Namibia was reached in 2021, six years after the official start of the negotiations.

Different from the above-mentioned studies, the current article examines why negotiations lasted for such a long time, even though the main issue was never contentious in Germany, neither was it an issue between the German government and the Namibian government. Furthermore, it needs probing whether the result fulfils the German government's most important objective: to provide an efficient shelter against similar demands. We proceed in the following way. First, we present a short overview of the underlying conflict – Germany's

(2003), 77–122; Bachmann, Klaus: "From German Southwest-Africa to the Third Reich. Testing the Continuity Hypothesis", *Journal of Namibian Studies: History Politics Culture* 23 (2018), 29–52.

214 Sarkin, Jeremy: *Colonial Genocide and Reparations in the Twenty-First Century: The Socio-Legal Context of Claims Under International Law by the Herero against Germany for Genocide in Namibia 1904–1908*, London: Westport 2009, 107–111.

215 Bargueño, David: "Cash for Genocide: The Politics of Memory in the Herero Case for Reparations", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 3 (2012), 394–424.

216 Eicker, Steffen: *Der Deutsch-Herero Krieg und das Völkerrecht. Die völkerrechtliche Haftung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für das Vorgehen des Deutschen Reiches gegen die Herero in Deutsch-Südwestafrika im Jahre 1904 und ihre Durchsetzung vor einem nationalen Gericht*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang 2009.

217 Bachmann, Klaus: Germany's Colonial Policy in German South West Africa in the Light of International Criminal Law, *Journal of Southern African Studies* (43/2) 2017, 331–347

218 Eicker, *der deutsche Herero Krieg*, passim.

colonial conduct in its colony German South-West Africa between 1904 and 1907, for which actors in Namibia, supported by civil organisations in Germany sought compensation. Then we present the main international law concepts, which could theoretically be invoked by the negotiators to address the Namibian claims. Next, we analyse the course of the bilateral negotiations with a special emphasis on the legal character of the Namibian demands and of the German response to it and how they relate to the earlier presented legal concepts. In the conclusion, we show that the ultimate settlement between both countries does not fit into any of these concepts and is also different from earlier settlements, which provided financial transfers to claimants and secured Germany from legally enforceable demands for reparations or compensations. We argue that exactly because of the novel and formally non-binding character of the settlement's financial consequences, the Namibian-German negotiations might trigger similar claims involving other former colonies and colonisers.

Germany's colonial atrocities in its only settler colony

Germany colonized the territory of Namibia at the end of the nineteenth century, but until 1904, it only exercised effective control over several harbours and smaller towns inside the country, excluding the Northern part of the country close to the border to Portuguese-held Angola, which remained under the rule of the Ovambo kingdoms. Central Namibia was mostly populated by Herero, a cattle-raising nomadic group, and the much smaller group of Damaras. Nama (then mostly called Hottentots) and Basters, a group with mixed-race ancestors that had migrated from the Cape Colony and settled among the Nama lived in the Southern part.²¹⁹ Different from the other German colonies in Africa, the government in Berlin regarded Namibia as a settler colony and supported Germans, who went there to establish farms or work for the administration.²²⁰ Despite generous subsidies for emigrants the German settler community remained

219 Wallace, Marion (with John Kinahan), *A History of Namibia. From the Beginning to 1990*, London: Hurst and Company 2011, 131–154. There were also, scattered across the country, the San people, then often called bushmen, which (alike the Damara) do not play any role in this article. The San later became indirect victims of the genocide, but today lack any effective representation in the political system and are not involved in the negotiations with Germany.

220 Walther, Daniel S.: *Creating Germans abroad. Cultural Policies and National Identity in Namibia*, Athens: Ohio University Press 2002, 9–45.

weak in German South-West Africa and suffered from a big female deficit.²²¹ A fragile peace characterised the years before 1904, policed by a small German colonial army, the *Schutztruppe* which employed locals, mostly Baster and Nama, to keep riots and uprisings at bay.

In January 1904 the Herero staged an uprising which was first and foremost directed against German traders and farmers. Many of the farmers had mistreated their Herero staff while traders had engaged in a business comparable to pawn laying after the abolition of serfdom in Europe. They used to sell goods to local Herero for credit and then execute the debts against Herero land, often by means of violence and exaggerating the goods' value and underestimating the land's value.²²² This way, more and more land had ended up in the hands of traders and subsequently settlers, who bought it. In 1903, the government imposed a ban on this kind of real estate swaps and negotiated land reserve boundaries with Herero leaders. The anticipated ban on loan – equity swaps inclined the traders to press their Herero clients even harder to repay and therefore increased the tensions between German traders and farmers on the one hand and Herero on the other hand. In January 1904, the Herero fled from the farms, withdrew into the bush and returned armed, attacking German settlements, farms and laying siege to towns. The *Schutztruppe* retaliated, but without much success.²²³

Until the 1904 Herero uprising, German governors had managed to respond to uprisings with a tactic of *divide-and-impera* and negotiations about the conditions of the protection treaties which the German state had concluded with the leaders of the local communities. Most likely, the Herero leaders expected a similar move, when they started the uprising. After several indecisive battles which proved costly for the Germans, the Herero withdrew to the Waterberg, a water-rich and densely overgrown mountain area north of Windhuk, where they could hide their cattle, shelter their families and prepare negotiations with the governor.²²⁴ Governor Theodor Leutwein was ready for such negotiations,

221 Walther, *Creating Germans abroad*, 10–43.

222 Pool, Gerhard: *Die Herero-Opstand 1904–1907*, Pretoria: Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij 1979, 84–117.

223 Nuhn, Walter: *Sturm über Südwest. Der Hereroaufstand von 1904 – ein düsteres Kapitel der deutschen kolonialen Vergangenheit Namibias*, Bonn: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, (3. Edition) 1996, 169–181.

224 Throughout the article, the geographical names of places, towns and regions will be used in the same version as they were used during the time of the events which are described. Therefore, today's capital of Namibia, Windhoek, will be written

but he – and the Herero – underestimated the influence of popular outrage and racist propaganda which had infuriated public opinion in Germany after the beginning of the uprising.²²⁵ Under its influence, the German government in Berlin deprived Leutwein of the command over the colonial army, sent additional troops and a ruthless colonial commander without any knowledge of the situation on the ground to quell the uprising by force. Lothar von Trotha, who had served in China and East Africa, imposed a state of war on the colony and deprived the Herero of any rights, to which they were entitled under international humanitarian law and German domestic law.²²⁶ From then on, German troops just could kill any armed person, without distinguishing between surrendering and wounded soldiers, civilians and prisoners of war. At the Waterberg, they circled the Herero with the intention, as von Trotha wrote to Berlin, to annihilate them as a nation.²²⁷ He failed, because the Herero managed to sneak out of the area under the cover of the night and escaped to the Omaheke desert, hoping to reach Botswana, where they had probed the British for asylum.²²⁸ Herero paramount chief Samuel Maherero managed to get there, but most of his people perished in the desert from illness, malnutrition, starvation and lack of water. The harsh conditions in the desert forced the German troops to withdraw without any major battles.²²⁹ Von Trotha's plan to annihilate the Herero at

“Windhoek” during South African rule and after independence, and “Windhuk” during German colonial rule.

- 225 Leutwein, Theodor: *Elf Jahre Gouverneur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, (4. Auflage Windhoek: Namibia Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 1997) (reprint of the original edition from 1908), 465–525; on public outrage and racism see also: Sobich, Frank Oliver: „Schwarze Bestien, rote Gefahr“. *Rassismus und Antisozialismus im deutschen Kaiserreich*, Frankfurt/M., New York: Campus 2006.
- 226 Bachmann, Klaus: *Genocidal Empires. German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich*, Berlin: Peter Lang 2019, 66–87.
- 227 Von Trotha wrote about his intent to ‘annihilate the Herero as a nation’ to his superiors in Berlin and in his diary (which is held by his descendants and to which Pool had access). The records about the correspondence with the general staff and the Chancellery are held in BArch R1001.2089. The diary note is in Pool, Gerhard: *Samuel Maherero*, Windhoek: Gamsberg MacMillan 1991, 272–273.
- 228 This is what Samuel Maherero later told South African writer and ethologist Eugène Marais, “Die Woestynvlug van die Herero's” in: Marais, Eugène N. (ed): *Sketse uit die Lewe van Mens en Dier*, Kaapstad, Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers Beperk 1928, 1–21.
- 229 Eckl, Andreas: „S'ist ein übles Land hier“. *Zur Historiographie eines umstrittenen Kolonialkrieges. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen aus dem Herero-Krieg in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1904 von Georg Hillebrecht und Franz Ritter von Epp*, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2005.

the Waterberg had failed. The Herero were out of his reach and his troops were stuck in the waterless desert, their horses dying and the soldiers starving and decimated by diarrhoea and fever. From a remote waterhole, von Trotha issued an order, in which he threatened the Herero to “drive them out of the country” and urged his troops to shoot any surrendering Herero and to chase away Herero civilians from waterholes to prevent them from getting water for the fighters.²³⁰ The order, which was cabled to Berlin as a proof of von Trotha’s heavy-handed approach, was kept confidential by the government and became public only a year later. Weary about the possible impact von Trotha’s antics could have on public opinion, Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow ordered von Trotha to rescind the order two months after von Trotha had issued it. Today, it is mostly referred to as von Trotha’s “extermination order.”

The revocation of the order forced the colonial army to take prisoners, rather than to just shoot anyone carrying arms. Most Herero fighters had died, either from wounds, starvation and diseases, others had fled to British-held territories, mostly Bechuanaland and Walvis Bay. Those who surrendered were mostly civilians, often ill and weak, who had not much chance to survive in the bush. They gathered in mission compounds and prisoner of war camps organized by the army. Although death rates in most of these camps were relatively low (they oscillated around 5 percent of the inmates) they soon became notorious because of one camp. On Shark Island, an island in Lüderitzbucht in the South, more than 40 percent of the inmates died, almost entirely from scurvy and malnutrition. Many of them were Nama who had joined the fight against the Germans after the Waterberg battle.²³¹

When the Emperor lifted the state of war in 1907, approximately 80 percent of the Herero population and half of the Nama population had disappeared.²³²

230 Von Trotha’s ‘extermination order’ is quoted in many works. Jan-Bart Gewald claims to have found the original version in Botswana: Gewald, Jan Bart: “The great general of the Kaiser”, *Botswana notes and records*, 26, 1994, 67–76.

231 Kreienbaum, Jonas: „Ein trauriges Fiasko“. *Koloniale Konzentrationslager im südlichen Afrika 1900–1908*, Hamburg: HIS Verlagsgruppe, (Neue Edition) 2015.

232 Many authors estimate the death toll for the Herero at 80 000 and $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pre-war population, while it is estimated that half of the Nama population died in the fighting with the Germans. It must be kept in mind that these numbers are tainted by a high, but unaccounted for number of Nama and Herero who did not die from the fighting, but from malnutrition, diseases and starvation in the desert. Many Herero also fled to British territory (but were not counted either) and diminished the population numbers in the German colony, but did not die after their escape. The fatalities in prisoner-of-war camps mostly did not die from violence, but from starvation and diseases

The Germans then had to set the surviving prisoners of war free, but were confronted to rising fear among the settlers about another uprising. Therefore, they decided to deport the leading Nama and Herero families to other German colonies, to deprive them of contact with their local followers. About 150 prisoners were brought to Togo and Kamerun, where approximately half of them died, before the government in Berlin agreed to repatriate the remaining survivors to German South-West Africa, pressured by German doctors and missionaries in Togo and Kamerun.²³³

In the historical literature, there has been a lot of controversy about the German war conduct, which the overwhelming majority of scholars regard as genocidal.²³⁴ There still is a lot of controversy about which German policies fulfil the criteria of the Genocide Convention and whether the Convention should materially and normatively be applied to this case or not.²³⁵ Some authors regard the entire German war conduct as genocidal, seeing the Herero escape from the Waterberg into the desert as a German “war ruse” intended to kill the Herero through the desert rather than in direct combat,²³⁶ while others see the

(which does, in moral and legal terms, not at all exonerate the German authorities that were responsible for ‘treating them humanely’). For the latter see: Kreienbaum, *ein trauriges Fiasko*, 76. The fatalities in the camps are summoned up in a document in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, B Arch R 1001 2140.

233 The records about the deportations are held at the Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde, Berlin, in the box R1001 2090.

234 Bley, Helmut: *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1884–1914*, Hamburg: Leibniz Verlag, 1968; Wassink, Jörg: *Auf den Spuren des deutschen Völkermords in Südwestafrika. Der Herero/Nama-Aufstand in der deutschen Kolonialliteratur. Eine literarhistorische Analyse*, München: Meidenbauer 2004; Zimmerer, Jürgen and Zeller, Joachim (eds): *Der Kolonialkrieg (1904–1908) in Namibia und seine Folgen* Berlin: Ch. Links, 2008; Sarkin, Jeremy: *Germany’s Genocide of the Herero; Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers*, Cape Town: James Curry, 2011; Gewald, Jan-Bart: *Herero Heroes. A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia 1890–1923*, Athens, Oxford, Cape Town: Ohio University Press and David Philip and James Currey, 1999.

235 The intertemporal principle in international law holds that the Genocide Convention, adopted in 1948, cannot be applied retrospectively. The debate is, however, if the notion of genocide as contained in the Genocide Convention could serve as a normative framework for purposes of a historical evaluation of an atrocity as potentially constituting genocide.

236 Drechsler, Heinz: „Let us die fighting.“ *The struggle of the Herero and Nama against German imperialism (1884–1915)* London: ZED Press, 1980; Drechsler, Heinz: *Südwestafrika unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft. Der Kampf der Hereros und Namas*

Waterberg battle as a legitimate war strategy and the escape as part of a Herero plan to get out of the siege and seek refuge in Bechuanaland.²³⁷ For some, von Trotha's extermination order, which clearly constituted a violation of Germany's international humanitarian obligations, is proof of genocide²³⁸, while for others, it is a propaganda stunt intended to impress von Trotha's superiors in Berlin (which it did, but differently from what he expected).²³⁹ There is much less controversy about Shark Island and the deportations, which clearly constituted violations of the Red Cross Convention and the Hague Conventions, by which Germany was bound then, and, under the Genocide Convention, would also fulfill the criteria of "creating conditions to bring about the destruction of the Nama and Herero" and "deportation" as a count of genocide.²⁴⁰

The main international law concepts for reparations and compensation for past atrocities committed by states and state-like actors

International law generally recognizes three basic consequences of an internationally wrongful act committed by a state or other subject of international law.²⁴¹ In the event of an internationally wrongful act (breaches of treaty and other international obligations),²⁴² the wronged party has the right to respond.

gegen den deutschen Imperialismus (1884–1915), Berlin: Akademie Verlag (zweite Auflage), 1984.

237 Bachmann, Klaus: *Genocidal Empires. German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich*, Berlin: Peter Lang 2019, 57–88.

238 Drechsler, *let us die fighting*, 182–183.

239 Bachmann, Klaus: *Genocidal Empires. German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich*, Berlin: Peter Lang, 78. Several diaries of von Trotha's officers confirm this version: Eckl, 116; Tagebuch von Viktor Franke, Archive of the Sam Cohen Library, Swakopmund, 373–380.

240 The death toll for the different camps stems from the statistic of an unknown German officer, held in BArch R1001.2140 as "Bericht über die Sterblichkeit in Kriegsgefangenenlagern", written on 23.3.1908. There is a statistic about prisoners of war camps in 1906 in the National Archives of Namibia, NAN D-N-I-3-2.

241 Crawford, James: *Brownlie's Principles of Public International Law* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 566.

242 The Permanent Court of International Justice held as follows: 'It is a principle of international law, and even a general conception of law, that any breach of an engagement involves an obligation to make reparation. ... The Court has already said that reparation is the indispensable complement of a failure to apply a convention, and there is no necessity for this to be stated in the convention itself.' (1928) PCIJ Ser A No 17, 29.

Such a response can take various forms, notably: invocation of the responsibility of the wrongdoer, demanding cessation and/or reparations, and taking countermeasures.²⁴³

While domestic legal systems normally have sophisticated and often rigorous procedures and institutions in place to deal with breaches of the law, the interstate and international consequences of internationally wrongful acts should be seen as functions of both international relations and international law, rather than legal responsibility analogous to domestic law. Many factors, including the type of wrongful act (a treaty violation, an obligation to prevent genocide, the unlawful use of force, and so on)²⁴⁴ and the lapse of time will impact on the choice of response to the wrongful act in question. Leaving aside the temporal and factual context, it is important to briefly consider the basic elements of the various consequences of an internationally wrongful act.

The first concept to consider is that of cessation. This can be regarded as a baseline response, because it refers to a state's basic obligation to comply with international law.²⁴⁵ Secondly, and more pertinent for present purposes is the notion of reparation, which should be considered as a remedy in the real sense, that is, a demand over and above the baseline insistence that a state acts in compliance with international obligations (cessation). A demand for reparation as a response to an internationally wrongful act can take many forms. It includes restitution, compensation, and satisfaction.²⁴⁶ *Restitution* as a remedy refers to a restoration of the disturbed status quo. As a remedy restitution may not be the most satisfactory, hence the possibility to use compensation as a means to address a past wrong. *Compensation* is constructed in monetary terms. The quantification of compensation for an internationally wrongful act is informed by a complex mixture of moral, political, and economic considerations, but it is still premised on the breach of a legal duty.²⁴⁷ For instance, where a state wages an illegal war against a victim state, leading to total or significant collapse of the victim state's economy, the quantification of damages may very well be based on

Interpretation of Peace Treaties with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, Second Phase, ICJ Reports 1950 221, 228.

243 Crawford, 566.

244 See, for instance: Uganda/DRC (ICJ) on the Unlawful Use of Force; Application of the Genocide Convention (Bosnia v Serbia).

245 Crawford, 567.

246 Crawford, 567.

247 Crawford, 567.

war as the proximate cause of the economic losses.²⁴⁸ Since domestic courts are limited by rules on sovereign immunity,²⁴⁹ the issue of compensation for internationally wrongful acts by states are normally dealt with at the inter-state or international levels by commissions and arbitral tribunals established by treaties or other international instruments.²⁵⁰ Thirdly, we have the remedy of *satisfaction*, which is rather open-ended and can range from symbolic gestures like apologies,²⁵¹ to declaratory judgments,²⁵² to promises not to repeat the wrongful act in question,²⁵³ to more drastic measures like criminal trials for individuals responsible for the internationally wrongful act (the creation of internationalized criminal chambers in the domestic courts of states comes to mind²⁵⁴).

248 The Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission held as follows: '[If] a State initiating a conflict through a breach of the *jus ad bellum* is liable under international law for a wide range of ensuing consequences, the initiating State will bear extensive liability whether or not its actions respect the *jus in bello*...Imposing extensive liability for conduct that does not violate the *jus in bello* risks eroding the weight and authority of that law and the incentive to comply with it, to the injury of those it aims to protect.' Final Award—Eritrea's Damages (2009) 26 RIAA 505, 600–601.

249 Recently: South Korean war crimes victims' claims against Japan in the courts of South Korea (Daniel Franchini, 'South Korea's denial of Japan's immunity for international crimes', 18 January 2021 *Völkerrechtsblog*, available at: <https://voelkerrechtsblog.org/de/south-koreas-denial-of-japans-immunity-for-international-crimes/>.) Also: Germany v Italy; Germany v Greece (ICJ) 2012 – the International Court of Justice confirms the principle of sovereign immunity. See also See: Hazel Fox and Philippa Webb, *The Law of State Immunity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 118–128.

250 Prominent examples are: Iran-US Claims Tribunal, the UN Compensation Commission, and the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission.

251 See also *Rainbow Warrior* affair, and France's "formal and unqualified apology" to New Zealand or the Belgian prime minister's apology to Rwanda for the Belgian role in the genocide in Rwanda 1994.

252 For instance, the International Court of Justice in: *Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v Serbia and Montenegro)* ICJ Reports 2007, 43 at 239. The findings concerning Serbia's violations of the Genocide Convention were considered appropriate forms of satisfaction.

253 In *Arrest Warrant of 11 April 2000 (DRC v Belgium)* ICJ Reports 2002, 3 at 32, the International Court of Justice recognized that Belgium had to do more than just to confirm to the DRC that it would discontinue the internationally wrongful act. The ICJ considered a positive act, the cancellation of the arrest warrant, to be the appropriate remedy.

254 Examples: Sierra Leone; Cambodia; Lebanon; Scottish Criminal Court sitting in the Netherlands (Lockerbie).

Whatever form reparations may take, it is in essence a backward-looking remedy aimed at restoration. The Permanent Court of International Justice articulated the basic principles as follows:

The essential principle contained in the actual notion of an illegal act...is that reparation must, as far as possible, wipe out all the consequences of the illegal act and re-establish the situation which would, in all probability, have existed if that act had not been committed. Restitution in kind, or, if this is not possible, payment of a sum corresponding to the value which a restitution in kind would bear; the award, if need be, of damages for loss sustained which would not be covered by restitution in kind or payment in place of it—such are the principles which should serve to determine the amount of compensation due for an act contrary to international law.²⁵⁵

The interests at stake may vary, thus informing the form of reparation. Often the wrongful act will only affect two parties, but sometimes the interest at stake is more collective in nature. This is especially true in the context of human rights and other universal norms.²⁵⁶

Intra-state reparation claims (for example for victims of state-sponsored persecution and other systemic or mass human rights violations) typically fall within the domain of transitional justice. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are often mandated to determine the relevant moral, factual and legal contours of reparation schemes for past atrocities.²⁵⁷ As we have seen, the international law consequences of an internationally wrongful act can take different forms, and this is true of intra-state post-conflict and post-atrocity remedies as well. The typical modalities include: public apologies and truth telling, expressions of sorrow, land restitution, monetary compensation and pensions, development and education, and so forth.²⁵⁸

Dealing with past atrocities, whether at the inter-state or intra-state levels, is legally, politically and morally complex, but it helps if there is an existing legal framework in place. From the brief discussion above it is clear that both international law and transitional justice provide potentially appropriate and even enforceable rules and principles relevant to reparation claims for past atrocities.

255 *Factory at Chorzów (Merits)* (1928) PCIJ Ser A No 17, 47.

256 International Court of Justice: *Barcelona Traction, Light and Power Company, Limited (Belgium v Spain)*, ICJ Reports 1970, 3, 32.

257 Many examples to list/discuss here (e.g. South Africa; Colombia; Guatemala).

258 Gilmore, Sunneva & Moffett, Luke: "Finding a way to live with the past: 'self-repair', 'informal repair', and reparations in transitional justice", *Journal of Law and Society* 2021, 455–480.

But there are also significant problems and obstacles, compounded by the lack of international frameworks dealing specifically with colonial-era atrocities. Many of the relevant legal frameworks (for instance, the Genocide Convention) only came into existence in the post-Second World War era when colonialism was already fading. Nevertheless, and despite the problems presented by the intertemporal principle, there seems to be renewed interest in reparations as a means to address past wrongs, including colonial-era atrocities. The German-Namibian negotiations regarding reparations for the genocide against the Herero and Nama, is a case in point.

There has been a growing realization that the traditional modalities and doctrines of international law are not always suitable vehicles for accountability and reparations for colonial-era atrocities. Even transitional justice modalities are increasingly criticized for being too narrowly focused on violations of individual rights, rather than with underlying structural and historical grievances. The rigidity of inter-state reparations modalities, generally governed by the principles of international law referred to above, and the narrowness of individualistic (as opposed to systemic) transitional justice mechanisms, prompted the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, to identify colonial contexts as particularly challenging.²⁵⁹

The Special Rapporteur examined two contexts: settler states, and former colonies that are now independent states. The latter context is of particular relevance for our purposes. Indeed, the Special Rapporteur, having examined various case studies, notes in his report that the “[2021] agreement between Germany and Namibia includes acknowledgement of the genocide against the Herero and Nama peoples (albeit with some reservations), public apologies and development assistance as compensation”. However, the Report also notes that the Germany-Namibia agreement “was negotiated without the participation of the affected communities”.²⁶⁰ The Report continues that in a scenario such as the Germany-Namibia negotiations, the premise is that two sovereign states are involved, thus requiring compromise, and management of obligations and expectations of response by both parties. The Report posits that the moral duties to “provide effective remedies to victims, ensure accountability, contribute to truth

259 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Salvioli, Fabián: “Transitional justice measures and addressing the legacy of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in colonial contexts”, UN Doc A/76/180, 19 July 2021.

260 Special Rapporteur Report, 18.

and memory, facilitate unrestricted access to archives and grant reparations to victims are clearly incumbent on the former colonizing Power.”²⁶¹ According to the Report, the post-colonial, independent state also has certain obligations. These obligations do not stem from moral responsibility for the atrocities committed by the former colonial state, but can be viewed as agency in various forms, including rehabilitation, socioeconomic reintegration and guaranteed access to justice, education, and the quest for truth and memorialization.²⁶²

The Special Rapporteur’s Report identifies several transitional justice modalities that can be utilized in post-colonial contexts, the most important of which are the following: accountability, truth, reparation, memorialization, guarantees of non-recurrence, and participation of victims. The element of reparation can take various forms, including restitution,²⁶³ rehabilitation,²⁶⁴ satisfaction,²⁶⁵ and compensation.²⁶⁶ Reparations, then, “must be accompanied by recognition of responsibility, be aimed at remedying the harm suffered by the victims and be linked specifically to truth, justice and guarantees of non-recurrence.”²⁶⁷

There is a well-established international legal foundation for the right to a remedy and reparation. A UN General Assembly resolution of 2005 codified the various principles and guidelines already recognized by the international community via the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other human rights, humanitarian, and international criminal law instruments.²⁶⁸ While these principles are now widely accepted as part of the body of international human

261 Special Rapporteur Report, 19.

262 Special Rapporteur Report, 20.

263 This element can include the restitution of land, repatriation of plundered cultural heritage, and the return of human remains.

264 Including medical and psychosocial rehabilitation.

265 Including public apologies and acknowledgements. For instance, in 2013 the United Kingdom offered an apology to Kenya regarding the Mau Mau claims, and Belgium apologised for the colonial-era crimes in the Congo, however the Belgian apology was not linked to any reparations, and were thus found to be insufficient by some of the affected communities. See Special Rapporteur Report, para 73.

266 Including the possibility of debt cancellation and other forms of financial compensation as reparation. See Special Rapporteur Report, para 74.

267 Special Rapporteur Report, para 55.

268 UN General Assembly, Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, G.A. Res. 60/147, 16 December 2005.

rights and humanitarian law, rights violations in the context of colonialism and other systemic racist injustices, seem to present particular challenges, as recognized by the UN Special Rapporteur. In settler-colonial contexts, for instance, it is very difficult to give effect to the principle of restitution, to the extent that this form of reparations is premised on a restoration of the status quo ante, that is, a restoration of the pre-colonial socio-economic and political reality. Of course, some forms of restitution would be more practical, feasible and realistic than others. A country like South Africa, for instance, has embarked on a program of land reform to address the racist and systemic legacies of colonial and apartheid land laws and expropriations. But the systemic nature of colonial-era atrocities makes it difficult to identify specific individual victims who would benefit from the applicable reparation modalities. This is so because of the massive scale of the crimes and, in the case of many colonial-era atrocities, because of the passage of time. Former colonial powers are at any rate very reluctant to link any of the reparation modalities to explicit or even implicit recognitions of *legal* responsibility. The typical approach is for the former colonial power to acknowledge that rights violations and atrocities have occurred in the past and that these may even be responsible for contemporary systemic inequalities and other socio-economic problems, but the acknowledgement only extends to historical, moral, and political responsibility, but not to any legal responsibility. The UN Special Rapporteur thus identifies this reluctance of the former colonial powers to accept the reparations modality as a deliberate strategy to avoid legal responsibility. Former colonial powers would rather give effect to their purported acceptance of moral and political responsibility in the form of “development aid”.²⁶⁹ The Report identifies the problem with this approach: development aid is not a form of reparation, because development aid addresses the general socio-economic rights of people as citizens of a country, not because of their status as victims of systemic crimes. Indeed, development aid is not only conceptually and logically the opposite of reparations, it can even be seen as a reinforcement of relations built on colonial hierarchies and power structures, and neocolonial economic and political submission.²⁷⁰ The Special Rapporteur puts the Germany-Namibia declaration in the category of “development aid”, because this agreement, even though it is premised on an acknowledgement of genocide, makes no mention of reparations and acknowledges only “moral responsibility”.²⁷¹

269 Special Rapporteur Report, paras 59–60.

270 Special Rapporteur Report, para 60.

271 Special Rapporteur Report, para 61, referencing the Germany-Namibia Joint Declaration (2021).

The negotiations

German-Namibian negotiations about compensation for the German genocide against the Herero and Nama between 1904 and 1907 did not start when Namibia became independent in 1990 and the German Democratic Republic requested to join the Federal Republic of Germany. Following reunification of the two countries, the Allied Powers from World War II agreed to revoke their powers in the so-called 4+2 process, which gave rise to a new treaty granting Germany full sovereignty. But regarding German-Namibian relations, nothing changed. For the latter, it was more important, when in 1994 a US citizen of Jewish descent and former forced labourer in Nazi-Germany, who had not been covered by the numerous West German compensation schemes for victims of the Third Reich, filed a lawsuit against the German government in an US court. The court granted state immunity to Germany. Nevertheless, a year later, the German government agreed to a payment to the Jewish Claims Conference, declared voluntary and humanitarian, whose aim was to cover the remaining unsettled claims of Jewish survivors in the US. The German government had explicitly demanded the payments not to be regarded as formal compensations, because it wanted to avoid any discussion about war reparations and regarded the underlying legal claims as unfounded. As the 1994 court verdict had shown, Germany enjoyed state immunity for the Third Reich's actions anyway. But German enterprises did not. In 1998, several Jewish organizations in the US filed another lawsuit, but that time not against the German state, but instead against German corporations with considerable assets in the US, which were legal successors of corporations, which had benefitted from forced labour during World War II. The Jewish plaintiffs did not demand compensation because they had suffered (such claims would have been covered by earlier compensation schemes) but – under US labour law – for lack of remuneration for the work they had done for these enterprises. By doing so, they circumvented the obstacle of state immunity and the argument, according to which their claims had already been dealt with in earlier bilateral agreements with Germany.²⁷² The possible outcome was unpredictable enough to incline the German government to step in and negotiate directly with the plaintiffs about an out of court settlement. Other governments, whose countries

272 From a civil law perspective, the victims decided not to demand compensation as victims but as partners in a contractual relationship. Legally, they did not claim to be victims of human rights abuses, but instead claimed to be workers whom their employer, the German enterprises, had cheated by withholding their salaries.

had provided forced labour to Nazi Germany during World War II, joined the negotiations. In July 2000, the German lower house, the Bundestag, approved a bill which created a German foundation, which would distribute 10 billion DM (half from the state budget and half from the German industry) to national foundations in each of the participating countries to former forced workers. Again, those payments were declared voluntary and humanitarian and the respective governments signed agreements, which relieved Germany from the burden to compensate forced labour in a legally enforceable way.²⁷³

In 2001, shortly after the *Bundestag* had voted on the bill creating the forced labour foundation, a group of Herero filed a lawsuit against *Deutsche Bank* and the *Deutsche Afrika Linien* in the US, also under the Alien Torts Act in two district courts. The Herero claimed these enterprises were the legal continuer of enterprises who had taken part in Germany's war against the Herero and the Nama and the *Deutsche Bank* had financed German colonial endeavours and the *Woermann Line*, which had transported soldiers to the colony to quash the Herero and Nama uprising and had taken part in the deportations.²⁷⁴ Both cases, the forced labour lawsuit and the Herero demands, looked similar, but there were also some differences. The Herero had no political support from the US establishment and the German government did not step in, because there were no significant German assets at stake in the US. The underlying atrocities had happened much earlier and the Herero had no chance of proving a causal effect between the atrocities and an actual tort for themselves, which a court verdict in the US could possibly repair. And finally, the applicable statute of limitations for the alleged crimes was ten years under US law and the Herero were unable to provide a compelling argument why their complaint had not been raised during the ten years after the end of colonial rule in Namibia. The case was dismissed in the state courts and subsequently also in a federal court.²⁷⁵ In all cases, the

273 The whole process, the legal background and the negotiations are best described in Kranz, Jerzy; Jałowiecki, Bartosz; Barcz, Jan: *Miedzy pamięcią a odpowiedzialnością. Rokowania w latach 1998–2000 w sprawie świadczeń za pracę przymusową*, Warszawa: Wyd. Prawo i Praktyka Gospodarcza, 2004.

274 The Woermann steamers connected the German mainland with its African colonies and had indeed transported soldiers and supplies for the war against the Herero to German South-West Africa. To guarantee the profitability of the Africa-routes, the German government had created a monopoly for Woermann and subsidized the (private) ocean carrier.

275 The respective verdicts can be found on: <https://casetext.com/case/hereros-v-deutsche-afrika-linien-gmbh-lt-co> and <https://casetext.com/case/herero-peop>

plaintiffs had pled the atrocities committed between 1904 and 1907 had been crimes against humanity and were justiciable under universal jurisdiction.²⁷⁶

During and after the hearings in the US courts, negotiations started between the government of Namibia and the government of Germany about two main issues: an official apology by the German government, which would include an admission that the atrocities in 1904 had been genocide, and financial compensation. In 1998, German president Roman Herzog had expressed “regret” for the atrocities committed by German soldiers, but without admitting genocide and without a formal apology. A few years later, the German minister for development aid, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, had already issued such an apology on her own behalf, from which the government had disassociated itself afterwards. The representatives of the Herero and Nama communities wanted the German government to admit genocide and apologize for it, but they also wanted the German government to pay what they called “reparations”, which were in fact individual compensations. Germany refused to pay individual compensations fearing this would create a precedent, which could expose Germany to claims for past atrocities without any timely limit. As a German interlocutor who has been directly involved in the negotiations explained: “If the German government consented to individual compensation, this could trigger similar claims from other countries for atrocities from a more distant past and it would re-open the negotiations with the Jewish Claims Conference about forced labour.” During the latter, Germany had only agreed to pay individual compensation to descendants of victims if the direct victims had died during the negotiations, but not to any relatives of workers, who had died before.

The negotiation position of the Namibian government was different. After 1907, the Ovambo ethnic group became the dominant one in Namibia. When the Germans started to develop the diamond mines, which had been discovered in 1908, their need for labour pulled Ovambo from the North into Central and Southern Namibia, where they filled the gap the Herero and Nama had left when they had perished during the war or fled abroad. When South Africa took

les-rep- arations-v-deutsche-bk#p1195 as well as: <http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-dc-cir-cuit/1054653.html>.

276 The problem with this argument was, however, that universal jurisdiction, a notion which describes the obligation of countries to punish international crimes (without a statute of limitations) regardless of whether they occurred under the country’s timely or territorial jurisdiction, is a concept from criminal, not private law. The lawsuit in the U.S. was a civil one, and though it asked for compensation, it did not seek to establish individual criminal responsibility.

over Namibia from German rule after World War I, the Ovambo became South Africa's main collective opponent, organized first in trade unions and then in the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), which the UN recognized as the sole political representative of the Namibian people. After the transition to democracy and independence in 1990, the Ovambo remained the dominant ethnic group. Since then, SWAPO has held a comfortable majority in parliament and has controlled the government. Despite Ovambo dominance, SWAPO is – like the African National Congress in South Africa – no ethnically homogenous party, it includes members of all ethnic communities and the current president of the country, Hage Geingob, stems from the Damara group.

The Namibian government, which is Germany's sole partner in the bilateral negotiations, preferred to see Germany's development aid increased, rather than to bolster the Nama and Herero, which are, to some extent, in opposition to SWAPO. The latter suspected SWAPO to monopolize the payments and use it for patronage.

An ambiguous result

In June 2021, the German government and the Namibian government agreed on a scheme, which foresees the payment of 1,1 billion euro from Germany to Namibia in the form of a 'voluntary humanitarian' transfer from the German budget to a joint foundation, whose aim is to channel these payments into projects, from which shall first and foremost benefit organisations working on the development of the Nama and Herero communities in Namibia. While Herero and Nama organisations in Namibia have already declared this scheme 'reparations' for the genocide, the German government denies any link between the scheme and the genocide. Nevertheless, it was also agreed that the German president will apologize for the genocide in Namibia and that both parliaments will pass a declaration about mutual reconciliation. Germany therefore explicitly labels the atrocities between 1904 and 1907 genocide, but denies the payment scheme to be a compensation for it. The new scheme is similar to – and tailored according to – a construction, which the German government used during the negotiations with the Jewish Claims Conference and governments of Central and East European countries at the end of the last century. Back then, private Jewish claims before US courts were settled through bilateral agreements about similar foundations, whose aim it was to pay "voluntary and humanitarian" aid to former forced labourers who had been employed by the German industry (whose legal successors had faced lawsuits for outstanding payments in the US courts). In exchange for these payment schemes, the respective governments took over their

citizens compensation claims towards Germany, legally sheltering the German government from future lawsuits. Despite all these similarities, there is an important difference between the forced-labour scheme and the one agreed upon now by Germany and Namibia. In the framework of the former, only the victims themselves (and, in rare cases, descendants of victims who had died between the settlement and the beginning of the payment scheme) were eligible for these payments. Because there are no direct victims of the German colonial atrocities alive any more, the construction from the last century was impossible to adopt. The German government wanted to avoid a scheme, which would compensate descendants, because it feared precedence which could be invoked by descendants of much earlier atrocities and would potentially also lead to additional claims by descendants from the forced-labourer negotiations. After the forced-labour negotiations, the German government had agreed only to pay for those forced workers who were still alive or who had died between the start of the negotiations and the settlement. If the German had agreed to directly compensate descendants of Herero and Nama genocide victims, those descendants of forced workers, whose relatives had died before the negotiations (and hence their biggest part) could claim payments invoking the Namibian precedence. The new mode of channelling money not to individuals (no matter whether direct victims or descendants of those) but instead to projects carried out on behalf of ethnic communities tries to address this problem. It reconciles the wish to compensate the genocide victims with the wish to avoid a precedent. Or at least, that is, what the German government wanted to achieve: to compensate for the genocide, to acknowledge the genocide but without admitting that the payments actually were compensations for the genocide. For the Namibian government, decoupling the genocide from the payments is no major problem. It is, though, for the Nama and Herero committees that oppose the deal exactly because of the decoupling. According to a report of the German Radio for foreign audiences, Deutsche Welle from 21.8.2021, when German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier arrives in Windhoek with an apology, he is likely to be greeted by protest rather than gratefulness. By concluding the deal with the Namibian government the German government could acquiesce its domestic and international audience by pointing to the payments, while rejecting similar claims elsewhere by stating that these payments had not been linked to the genocide but were just another “humanitarian scheme” like the forced-labour agreement.²⁷⁷ This is where

277 The parliament of Tanzania raised such claims in 2018, but the German and the Tanzanian government decided not to pursue them. See: Bachmann, Klaus and Kemp,

the quagmire starts that may well constitute a precedent, and which may trigger more rather than less financial compensation claims for colonial atrocities.

The puzzle: Why did Germany agree to pay without an apparent legal case?

Germany and Namibia did not reach a settlement because Namibia or the Namibian Herero and Nama genocide committees had any legal leverage over Germany. Unlike the Jewish Claims Conference's lawsuits, the Namibian court actions in the US failed. Despite their announcement, the Herero and Nama committees never followed through with a complaint against Germany at the International Court of Justice, where they at any rate had no legal standing (only Namibia as a state had the necessary standing). They could have undertaken court action before Namibian courts, but there, Germany would have enjoyed state immunity from court action. Suppressing an uprising of two ethnic groups more than a hundred years ago in Namibia may certainly be viewed as a moral outrage today, but would arguably fall under the *actione juris imperii* reservation of international law, even if such action was accompanied by acts of genocide (which, of course, were not yet codified under international law). No verdict from a Namibian court would be enforceable in Germany. German courts would reject any such lawsuit invoking state immunity. While all members of the Council of Europe agreed in 1967 in a convention to settle their disputes at the International Court of Justice, there is no such mechanism in force for conflicts between Council of Europe members and third countries.²⁷⁸ Even the government of Namibia, acting on behalf of the country, could not sue Germany at the ICJ without the latter's consent. In other words – with the US courts reneging, no court wields jurisdiction over the Herero and Nama claims against Germany. And here comes the great puzzle: so why did Germany pay then?

The above-mentioned categorization of possible interstate settlements after violent conflicts in cessation, reparation, restitution and satisfaction is derived from the logic of international law and international relations as spheres regulating the relationships between states, represented by their governments in the

Gerhard: "Was quashing the Maji-Maji uprising genocide? An Evaluation of Germany's Conduct through the Lens of International Criminal Law", *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 35/2 (2021), 235–249.

278 European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes (established in the framework of the Council of Europe in 1957), available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680064586>.

first place. Cessation means to bring to a stop an illegal state action against another state, reparation describes the actions undertaken by one state to satisfy another one, restitution and compensation include one state's actions towards another with the objective to reinstate the status quo ante or, when this is impossible, to pay compensation. All of these involve one state undertaking action against another state. According to this logic, if restitution is impossible to provide satisfaction to the demanding state, compensation must be paid, but the respective transaction takes place between the governments of the two states and the receiving state is unconstrained to use the compensation according to its will. This is how reparation claims were dealt with before and immediately after World War II: the victor either takes reparations in kind from the vanquished, or uses a forfeit, which he frees after the other side agrees to pay the requested amount. No matter which option the victorious state chooses, its government is free to spend the obtained assets for war victims, the reconstruction of the country, re-armament or something else. Reparations after World Wars I and II used to be paid from state to state and often took the form of territorial annexations, the confiscation and removal of factories and infrastructure and the seizure of foreign financial assets. While the receiving state was free to distribute the seized assets among its population at will, the sending state had to care for a just distribution of its losses, either by increasing sovereign debt, taxes or by reducing budget expenditure. With the expansion of liberal, participative democracy, increasing awareness for victims (rather than for heroes), and social individualisation after World War II, compensation as means to repair large scale harm done to the population of another state has undergone a transformation, too. Now, as annexation and confiscation are no longer possible, but many grievances from World War II and other conflicts are still unsettled, the focus is on the individual victims rather than the state level and more often than not have governments engaged in negotiations about satisfaction in the form of financial compensation for individual victims rather than state-to-state payments. Discussions and policy papers urging states to compensate the harm done to other states' citizens emphasize this new trend at the level of the UN as well as regionally and supranationally at the EU and the AU (especially as it pertains to transitional and post-conflict justice)²⁷⁹. As the case of Germany and

279 Elements of (international/inter-state) transitional justice mechanisms and approaches can be read into the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as other relevant African instruments. See: https://www.achpr.org/public/Document/file/English/ACHPR%20Transitional%20Justice_ENG.pdf.

the forced-labour negotiations show, these payments take place in the absence of any legal framework that would force governments to make them. Literally all payments the Federal Republic of Germany made to other countries to alleviate grievances resulting from World War II were individual payments, not reparations in the sense of state-budget – to state-budget payments.²⁸⁰ When the government of the United Kingdom agreed in 2013 to satisfy Kenyan torture victims from the Mau-Mau revolt in the 1950s, it paid individual compensation to 5228 Kenyans, not to their government. And it continued to deny (different from the German position towards Namibia), liability for the actions of its colonial administration and declared to defend claims brought from other former British colonies. “We do not believe that this settlement establishes a precedent in relation to any other former British colonial administration,” foreign secretary William Hague said at the time.²⁸¹ There, too, a colonial power had agreed to pay compensation without any legal obligation forcing it to do so.

Creating a precedent while trying to avoid one

These settlements came into being in the same way, which is, to some extent, typical for the way past harms are dealt with in interstate relations after the immediate post-war period, during which confiscation was still possible. Governments agree to pay not because there is any legally binding and enforceable framework, which would coerce them to do so, but because of the influence of transnational norm entrepreneurs, who manage to become agenda setters in domestic politics of other countries and to garner leverage over their public disputes. By doing so, they influence institutional decision making and public opinion in the same way, domestic and international lobby networks do.

The German-Namibian example is a particularly extreme and asymmetric one. While the British government acquiesced to the compensation for the Mau-Mau veterans before the British (domestic) Court of Appeal could rule on it, no such legal constraint was on the German government, when it approved the agreement with Namibia. And yet the amount at stake was much higher than in the British case. When German post-war governments negotiated individual compensation schemes they met fierce domestic resistance from social

280 Ruchniewicz, Krzysztof: *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie w latach 1944/45–1975*, Wrocław: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2007.

281 *The Guardian*, 6.6.2013, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/uk-compensate-kenya-mau-mau-torture>

movements, media outlets and conservative opposition parties, because the issue was still salient and threatened to harm the material interest and political convictions of parts of the population. When the German-Namibian negotiations started in 2015, no organized political party or pressure group opposed it. This changed slightly after 2017, when the negotiations were already underway and the right-wing populist and nationalist *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) entered the Bundestag and some of its members of parliament denied the genocide label for the colonial atrocities in the German colony and opposed compensation. Due to the other parties' complete isolation of AfD, the party did not have any leverage over the negotiations, though. Because the negotiations started more than a hundred years after the underlying events, there were no German stakeholders like pressure groups of former colonial settlers or militaries, who could oppose the apology and the principle of compensation. On the other side of the barricade, there were many local initiatives, who pushed the government to make concessions to Namibia and the respective Herero and Nama communities and, due to the most recent immigration from Africa to Germany, there were considerable networks of transnational activists, putting pressure on the German government. Therefore, the entire setting was asymmetric: media outlets (even conservative ones), the political establishment (minus the AfD after 2017) and the local post-colonialist pressure groups pushed the government to apologize and pay, while next to no-one opposed their demands. In other words: the Herero and the Nama committees had managed to create a transnational activist network, which put the topic on Germany's political agenda and created the necessary momentum to push the government into negotiations.²⁸² And then, in the absence of any legal obligation, the German government agreed to an apology and a compensation scheme. And here comes the next crucial element: for the reasons set out above, the scheme did not envisage individual compensation, but instead a kind of collective compensation, which assumes today's Nama and Herero communities – no matter their organisational structure – to be entitled to the legacy of the Herero and Nama who fell victim to the genocide after 1904.

Claims which fit well into the well-known international concepts described above usually concern relatively recent events and therefore trigger opposition from parts of the populace who sides with the perpetrator side of the conflict (or openly denies the atrocities took place). In these cases, direct victims are still

282 More information about these post-colonial initiatives, see: Schilling, Britta: *Postcolonial Germany: memory of empire in a decolonized Nation*, New York, London: Oxford University Press, 2014.

alive and international courts may wield jurisdiction over the crimes, like, for example, the different lawsuits of countries emanating from the former Yugoslavia at the ICJ.²⁸³ Such claims, if successful in court, are more easily legally enforceable, but politically more difficult to sustain on the level of the respective colonial centre's domestic political system. With the kind of settlement Germany concluded with Namibia, the opposite is true: the more distant in time such claims are, the less likely is successful litigation in court. On the other hand, though, the weaker will be domestic opposition against them in the colonial centre. The pressure on perpetrator states, to agree to such settlements, will most likely not come from legally enforceable international court verdicts, but from non-binding regulations, such as, for example, the 2001 United Nations project of a Convention on the Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, which, if it enters into force, creates a responsibility for a state to repair unlawful acts. In art. 13 it excludes retroactivity if the state was not bound "by the obligation in question at the time the act occurs." Applied to the German situation back in 1905–1907, the convention would create an obligation to remedy the harm done because Germany was then bound by the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II) and the Red Cross Convention. Germany ratified the former in 1899 and the latter in 1906. The obligation to compensate harm done by a belligerent party (which is already enshrined in art. 3 of Hague II) will then no longer be restricted to a state party and the question of whether the Nama or Herero enjoy legal continuity with regard to Namibia would no longer be relevant. So far, without continuity, litigation of non-state actors against a state for atrocities which took place beyond the timely jurisdiction of international tribunals and courts was blocked. The 2001 project would change that and then become the perfect tool for strategic litigation of transnational networks working on behalf of descendants of colonial atrocities.

Neither jurisdictional nor political obstacles will therefore prevent the German – Namibian case from becoming a precedent for this new kind of strategic litigation, which uses courts (even when they don't have the necessary jurisdiction) to raise public awareness and set the agenda of public disputes in order to achieve a political solution to a problem framed in legal terms. Soon, former colonial centres might be forced to pay for past atrocities not because of international courts' verdicts but because of political and moral entrepreneurship from transnational actors and organisations that find a fertile ground for

283 Mistry, Hemi: "The International Court of Justice's Judgment in the Final Balkans Genocide Convention Case." *Human Rights Law Review* 16.2 (2016), 357–369.

their claims in the domestic public of the former colonial centre. This ground, we argue, may be much more fertile than the one behind a well-argued lawsuit before a court, and it is based on a new kind of strategic litigation that does not aim at obtaining an advantageous verdict in the matter, but intends (and manages) to increase the moral and political pressure on the defendant. With the German-Namibian settlement, unsatisfied descendants of Third Reich victims and of victims of colonialism cannot plead precedence in any international court. But they can efficiently reject the German argument about the impossibility to meet their demands because of restraints in international law, according to which neither restitution, nor collective or individual compensation is possible. By approving the settlement, Germany created a new option, which from now on can serve as a precedence: Compensation for past atrocities, whose victims are no longer alive, is not only possible, but also more likely to be achieved by future claimants than before the German-Namibian settlement – not because it has become more easily enforceable in legal terms, but because the legal mode is no longer necessary to achieve the intended result.

7. A keyhole to Rwandan history²⁸⁴. Missionary accounts about pre-colonial Rwanda and their limitations

The first men (there were no women among them) who arrived in Rwanda were, apart from travellers and Arab and Indian traders, the White Fathers, catholic missionaries from the “The Society of Missionaries of Africa” in Algiers. They were also the first with a genuine interest in the local population and the intent to stay in the country, whereas traders usually minded their business and travellers were more interested in nature, animals, and the landscape (especially the rivers and the Virunga craters) than in the population and its habits, customs, and laws. When the missionaries arrived, Germany still held an outpost in Shengi on the southern shore of Lake Kivu, but its task was not to control the local population, but to mark the coastline as German territory. It was a purely symbolic presence, with no military significance and no colonial tasks.²⁸⁵ German officers and commanders used to write reports, letters, and private diaries, some of which were later published. But they usually (with the exception of Richard Kandt) lacked a deeper knowledge of the country and did not understand or speak Kinyarwanda.²⁸⁶ The White Fathers were different, they quickly learned Kinyarwanda and often also Swahili and used to live among the local population. They wrote reports and letters to their superiors in Algiers and Europe to the German administration and the German military outposts, and after 1916 also to the Belgian authorities; they accommodated travellers and researchers (like Czekanowski and, after World War II many more from various countries), served as interpreters and intermediaries between these guests and the locals. They often had their own interests and their own agenda, which transpires through their actions and writings, but their records are a rich source

284 Research for this article was sponsored by the National Science Centre, Poland (NCN grant no. 2015/19/B/HS3/02497 “A history of Rwanda”).

285 It had some influence on the social fabric of its immediate neighbourhood, which is well explained in Newbury, Catharine: *The Cohesion of Oppression. Clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda 1860–1960*. New York: Columbia University Press 1988, 54–57.

286 Kandt, who later learned Kinyarwanda, first also relied on a translator.

on social life in early colonial Rwanda. They are now stored at the Congregation headquarter in Rome and the archives of the Erzbistum Trier in Germany, which have recently been moved to Aachen and now belong to Missio. Additionally, the White Fathers also maintained their own publications in French and German. Their main purpose was to support their fundraising efforts and strengthen the Congregation's influence on politics and the Catholic establishment in Germany and at the Vatican, and to keep together and connect with their followers in Europe. Notwithstanding their religious mission, the White Fathers acted like a transnational nongovernmental organization and had priests from a multitude of European (and later also African) countries in their ranks in outposts in several European and African countries. Many authors used their records at a time when state records in Brussels and Germany were still unavailable to researchers.

Originally, the chronicles White Father the mission station diaries and the annual reports were available only in Rwanda. Then, in the 1960s, the Congregation archive in Rome started to copy them manually (on a typewriter), making them available to researcher with a 50 year embargo. In addition the Congregation also holds the correspondence of many Fathers with their colleagues and superiors as well as with outsiders (for example German and Belgian colonial officers). In recent years, the Belgian priest (and former missionary), historian and archivist Stefaan Minnaert has started to publish thematically arranged archival sources in books, of which some also contain mission diaries, reports and outside sources.²⁸⁷

Another one of these outside sources are stored in the Bundesarchiv in Lichterfelde (Berlin), and they form a small part of the documentation concerning German East Africa. Until German troops had to withdraw from Rwanda in 1916 after a Belgian invasion from the Congo, Rwanda was part of German East Africa, although with a specific status. Beginning from 1905, Europeans were forbidden to settle in Rwanda to avoid conflicts with the Rwandan court.²⁸⁸ When Belgian troops took over in 1916, the German records from Kigali (where governor Kandt had established his residence in 1908) were taken

287 Stefaan Minnaert: *Ecrits de Mgr Hirth*, Tome 1, 1900–1905, Kigali (no publisher) 2019; Stefaan Minnaert: *Le Père Léon Classe (1874–1945)*, Kigali 2022; Stefaan Minnaert: *Le Rwanda vu par le Père Brard (1898–1906)*, Kigali 2021; Stefaan Minnaert: *Recueil d'articles et de documents*, Kigali 2017.

288 After 1905, there were only two white traders who were allowed to stay in the realm of Yuhi V. Musinga, a Boer called Pretorius and an Austrian, Fritz Schindelaar, whose diary from Rwanda I discovered in the National Archives of Tanzania in Daressalam (NAT). Nothing else is known about Pretorius.

to Brussels, where they are now available in the Royal Library (until 2018 they were kept in the library of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Only those German documents which ended up in Daressalam and were later evacuated to Berlin can now be consulted in the Bundesarchiv. A small part remained in Daressalam. One can read them at the National Archives of Tanzania, but they are in very dire state and very fragmentary. Belgium stores its colonial records from Rwanda in the Royal Library in Brussels, after they were moved there from the Library of the Belgian Foreign Ministry in 2018. They also include materials from the *Institut Nationale de Recherche Scientifique* at Astrida (later Butare, today Huye), at which Rwandans also carried out research. Today, the collections of the Rwandan Archive and Library Service Authority (RALSA) also contain some of these materials.

In addition to these state records, there are numerous private collections, some of which are in places one would hardly suspect of holding information about Rwandan history and the White Father congregation. One of them is the Library of the University of Warsaw (Poland), which keeps Jan Czekanowski's estate.²⁸⁹ It consists of letters, diaries, and collections of music and artwork descriptions gathered during his trip to Central Africa between 1905 and 1907 as part of an expedition organized by the Count of Mecklenburg. Czekanowski later published a seminal work analysing the social fabric, family and clan-relations, geography and anthropology of the Great Lake region, which constitutes a wonderful source on social life in Rwanda.²⁹⁰ Czekanowski's works were published in German, French, and Polish, but his German and Polish publications were often ignored by later researchers.

In 1907, the Duke of Mecklenburg's large Central African expedition²⁹¹ arrived in what is now Rwanda and the observations and collections of some of its members served as a basis for anthropological, sociological and historical discussions in Germany and beyond until the outbreak of World War II.²⁹²

289 Czekanowski's service-related records are at the Ethnologisches Museum in Dahlem, Berlin. The records kept in Dahlem are all related to his work for the Duke of Mecklenburg. His private notes, manuscripts, diaries etc. are stored in Warsaw.

290 Czekanowski, Jan: *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo-Zwischengebiet*. Leipzig 1911–1927; Bd. I, *Ethnographie. Zwischenseengebiet. Mpororo / Ruanda. Mit einem musikalischen Anhang von. E. M. v. Hornbostel*. Leipzig 1917.

291 Herzog zu Mecklenburg, Adolf F.: *Ins Innerste Afrika. Bericht über den Verlauf der deutschen Zentral-Afrika-Expedition*. Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann 1909.

292 The production of knowledge about Rwanda based on the expedition continued after World War I without any change of paradigm, while World War II brought major historiographical changes.

The expedition included a Polish nobleman, Jan Czekanowski, born in Warsaw, who had studied in Switzerland and following his return from Central Africa began working at the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin-Dahlem.²⁹³ In 1917 he published a five-volume monograph about his observations during the German Central African Expedition, which also included a volume concerning Rwanda: the first extensive analysis of Rwandan social life, a sociological account of the relations between and within the most important groups and families, an account about family life, social values and norms, agriculture, the contention of violence, and the justice system. Czekanowski did not have access to the ruling circles, the court, the *abatutsi* notables, and he did not speak and understand Kinyarwanda (or not very well), unlike many White-Father anthropologists and historians after him. It is likely (though never revealed by him) that most of his knowledge came from missionaries and was derived from interviews with Rwandans thanks to the work of translators.²⁹⁴ Even before he arrived in Rwanda, Czekanowski expected the White Fathers to help him with his research, as he admitted in his diary.²⁹⁵ Czekanowski left a large legacy in the form of letters, draft reports and manuscripts, stored in the Library of the University of Warsaw and partly also in Dahlem. Much of the Czekanowski collection in Warsaw is in Polish and was never used in the context of Rwandan history.²⁹⁶

293 Although Czekanowski was a Russian citizen when he took part in the expedition, we treat him as Polish, because after Poland's declaration of independence he accepted Polish citizenship and lived in Poland until his death.

294 During the early days of the White Fathers' presence, translation often was indirect: intermediaries did not translate between Kinyarwanda on the one hand and German or French on the other hand, but through Swahili and often involving an additional translator. Czekanowski spoke and understood German and French, he later also published in these languages (besides Polish). Jones, Adam (ed.): *Jan Czekanowski: Africanist Ethnographer & Physical Anthropologist in Early Twentieth-century German and Poland*. Leipzig: Institut für Afrikanistik 2002.

295 BUW, dział rękopisów, dr Czekanowski, dziennik, A-52, A-101 and A-104.

296 But it was used for works dealing with Polish anthropology and bibliographical research about Czekanowski: Bar, Joanna (ed): *Jan Czekanowski: W głąb lasów Aruwimi. Dziennik wyprawy do Afryki Środkowej*. Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze 1958. Anthropologists used to cite Czekanowski's research outside Rwanda, for example Evans Pritchard in his works about the Zande. Bar, Joanna: *Afrykanistyczne badania Jana Czekanowskiego w stulecie wyprawy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej 2007, 146–148; Czekanowski, Jan: *Dziennik podróży afrykańskiej*. Warszawa: Aspra-JR 2014, 8. Czekanowski also was more popular among (and more often cited by) Belgian anthropologists and historians than among his French and American colleagues.

Czekanowski's work is important, not only because of his focus on every-day life and his sociological observations, but also because he was the first European researcher before the White Fathers started to set the anthropological and historical research agenda on Rwanda and because his writings are almost untainted by their frames, notions, and concepts: he did not write about racial tensions between Tutsi and Hutu (these categories were much less important to him than the notions of household, lineage, clan, region and social strata), he did not search for parallels in European history, he did not try to write a grand narrative about the existence of feudalism in Central Africa.²⁹⁷

Peter Schumacher, a White Father missionary, arrived in Rwanda at almost the same time as Czekanowski. He learnt Kinyarwanda quickly and with great skill and, despite being German, kept close ties to both colonial administrations, the German and the Belgian one. That enabled him to stay in the country after World War I. He later wrote a big and very detailed monograph about the society, economy, and governance of pre-colonial and early colonial Rwanda, but this oeuvre was never published as a book and its readership was limited to specialists able to read in German.²⁹⁸ This was also the reason why many of his findings never made it into the works of anthropologists and historians publishing in English and French. Authors of more recent works on Rwanda referred to Schumacher and Czekanowski only with a few citations.²⁹⁹ White Father accounts in French drew more attention from researchers from outside Rwanda. The first to write a monograph about Rwanda was Amadée Pagès in 1933 and his book title already reveals the main feature of most books about Rwanda from those times: Rwanda as "a hamitic kingdom".³⁰⁰ The second important feature,

297 In his diaries, he drew some analogies between rural life in Rwanda and Russia. Bachmann et al. (eds): *Every-day Life in Early Colonial Rwanda. Insights from German and Polish Sources*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz 2020, 93. His (so far unpublished) diary in Polish also contains some comparisons between social relations in the rural Russian parts of partitioned Poland and social relations in Western Tanganyika. BUW, dział rękopisów, dr Czekanowski, dziennik, A-98-A-99.

298 Schumacher, Peter: *Ruanda*. Posieux: Micro-Bibliotheca Anthropos 1958 (only available as microfilm).

299 Des Forges, Alison L.: *Defeat Is the Only Bad News, Rwanda Under Musinga, 1896–1931*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 2001; Linden, Jan: *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda (1900–1990)*. Paris: Karthala 1999; Schumacher, *Ruanda*, passim; Czekanowski, *Forschungen*, passim.

300 Pagès, Albert: *Un royaume hamite au centre de l'Afrique*. Bruxelles: Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer. Classe des sciences morales et politiques 1933.

unsurprising considering the background of its author, was a large study on Rwandan aristocracy, which at the time of writing was already Tutsi in the ethnic meaning of that word. The author, Léon Delmas, also a White Father, had lived in Rwanda since 1905 and understood and spoke Kinyarwanda well. He published his book almost twenty years after the mass Tutsi conversions to Catholicism, when the White Fathers' focus had long shifted to the Tutsi leadership, the court and the notables, when Rwanda was already a Catholic kingdom and the king a converted Catholic, as de Lacger, and before him the congregation's founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, had dreamt. Until Delmas' publications, the court in Nyanza and the notables had kept European researchers at bay, even if they were Catholic missionaries: no one had got access to the *ubwiru*, the monarchy's unwritten regulations of rites, succession norms, kings' lists and the official version of Rwandan history, enshrined in narratives, which some *abiru* (advisors to the king) had to learn by heart and pass on to their successor in the next generation. Until then, the history of Rwanda remained a history of the ruling elite and the European (German, Belgian, and missionary) activities there, with little emphasis on social differences, social change, or every-day life. Even when in 1954 Jacques Maquet published a book about social relations in Rwanda, he relied on elite respondents (most of them Tutsi) and then drew conclusions about mutual attitudes and inequalities between Hutu and Tutsi.³⁰¹ Nor did he have access to the court's secrets.

This changed with Alexis Kagame's first publications during the 1940s. Kagame is a unique figure among historians of Rwanda as well as among missionaries and members of the Rwandan political establishment. He was the offspring of a Northern Tutsi lineage, the *abahabga*. His family had benefitted from Rwabugiri's rule and lost several influential members (Kagame's uncles) in the fighting surrounding Rucunshu. Due to the White Fathers' policy to indigenize the Rwandan clergy, he had become a Catholic priest and obtained access to king Mutara, the young and baptized successor to Musinga, whom the Belgian administration had humbled and banned. Relying on *abiru*-informers, advisors to and ritualists for the king, Kagame wrote several books about the rituals and succession norms of the monarchy, the functioning of Rwanda's precolonial institutions, the history of its armies, and the *abanyiginya* dynasty. Despite the wide range of his interests, the same feature permeated his works: a nineteenth-century style of positivist

301 Maquet, Jacques J.: *Le système des relations sociales dans le Ruanda ancien*. Tervuren: Musée royal du Congo belge 1954 (the volume was republished by Routledge in 2018).

historiography, whose focus are rulers, their entourage, and heroic episodes from the past. History is linear and described in a way that makes the present look like an inevitable consequence of the past. The purpose of such narratives is it to legitimize the (monarchist) political order of the day. To complicate the whole account even more, Kagame remained a monarchist even when Rwandan monarchists took an anti-colonial stance and rejected the international community's and the Hutu opposition's demands for democracy and general elections. He did not change his attitude after the abolition of the monarchy and remained a respected scholar in Rwanda, even when the repressions of the new (Hutu) rulers drove thousands of Kagame's Tutsi compatriots abroad.

Kagame was a politician, a cleric, a Rwandan patriot and a historian at the same time, or at least that is how other historians initially treated him. His stories about victorious kings, the expansion of Rwanda thanks to brave rulers and courageous fighters and his claims about a thousand-year-old monarchy in the middle of the Great Lakes region fit well into the nationalist trends in Europe of the 1940s, and at the same time they were heart-warming for the incipient anti-colonial tendencies and the oppositional Hutu movement, because they bolstered claims about Rwanda's alleged singularity and Rwandan exceptionalism. They often relied on him when praising Rwanda's alleged glorious past and its thousand-year-old history, but diverged when assessing the role of Hutu in this narrative, criticizing his negligence of what they saw as oppression and exploitation of the Hutu land-clearers and real owners of the country by an alien caste of Tutsi invaders. But when Kagame wrote about glorious kings and heroic campaigns, Rwandans believed him, while Europeans regarded him as a historian of the court and the monarchy, like a hagiographer at one of the Europe's medieval courts. From today's perspective, he was first and foremost a very efficient gatekeeper between the court and outside historians. He made the utmost of this position for himself, concealing his informers and guarding access to them. Historians should rather see him as a source than a historian, Claudine Vidal later wrote.³⁰² But until today, he has remained the main reference for Rwanda's pre-colonial history, because in the absence of written primary sources, his writings seem to be the only reliable basis of such a history. But they feign knowledge they do not contain.

302 Vidal, Claudine: "Alexis Kagame (1912–1981)" in: Vidal, Claudine: *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire*. Paris: Karthala 1991, 45–61; Vidal, Claudine: "Alexis Kagame entre mémoire et histoire." *History in Africa* 15, 1988, 493–504.

If one traces the information from Schumacher, Delmas, Pagès, and Kagame back to their informers, it becomes apparent that all historians of pre-colonial Rwanda pumped the same well: the same handful of court notables. Even more: Kagame and Pagès, Delmas and Kagame knew each other, exchanged information and discussed their topics with each other. We know about this because all – except Kagame – reveal their sources in their publications. In some cases, these mutual contacts show up in their correspondence, which is now stored in various archives. Only Kagame did not admit he relied on the earlier work of others,³⁰³ although these others were his missionary colleagues, fellow historians and – as in the case of Pagès – promoters who praised his insight and intelligence in their books.³⁰⁴

Gatekeeping and creating grand narratives

It is impossible to write a history of Rwanda – or any regional or partial chronology of Rwandan history – without sources from or inspired by White Father accounts. Their unique access to Rwandan society and – beginning from the 1930s – also to the political establishment made them gatekeepers and gave them a quasi-monopolistic position in knowledge production about history. There were a lot of tensions between the supranational, cosmopolitan congregation of catholic missionaries and the mostly protestant and nationalist German military and civil administration. After World War II the congregation developed and maintained very close and amical relations with the Belgian colonial administration. White Fathers wrote advisory analyses for the administrations and sometimes even answered outside inquiries on behalf of the resident, they delivered information and helped to organize the education system. Missionaries wrote books and articles about anthropological, historical and political issues; they taught in schools, negotiated with chiefs and were the gatekeepers to the country for outsiders coming to Rwanda, researchers, travellers, politicians and the foreign catholic clergy. They created some of the grand narratives about an alleged

303 Vansina, Jan: “Qui se cache deriere les historiens du Rwanda et quelle importance a-t-il?” (probably the text of a lecture held at Louvain-La-Neuve in 2001), The Jan Vansina Papers at Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Special Collections at the Northwestern University, Chicago, African Manuscripts #30 Box 119, folder 37; Kagame could hardly benefit from Schumacher’s research, because Schumacher left Rwanda when Kagame was 24 years old and Schumacher published his research after Kagame’s main publications.

304 Vidal, *Kagame*, 47–48.

Hamitic kingdom in the heart of Africa, Rwanda's feudal society which shaped popular history in Europe (and in Rwanda) for centuries.

No scholar today will take missionary accounts literally, no one will ignore the racial, colonialist background and the prejudice with which explorers, travellers, and nineteenth century anthropologists arrived in Africa.³⁰⁵ Nevertheless, in the absence of written sources about pre-colonial and early colonial times in Rwanda, missionary accounts and traveller observations remain the only sources available for a social history of Rwanda during the early colonial period. Missionaries were the only ones with detailed descriptions of everyday life, kinship relations, and the country's social fabric. But when doing so, one needs to be aware of the plethora of traps, into which researchers and readers of missionary accounts can possibly fall if they take these accounts at face value.

The pitfalls of missionary accounts

The first is the most obvious one and it has been dealt with so many times and extensively enough to describe it here only in a very cursory way: all White Fathers who came to Rwanda had the Hamitic Theory in their luggage. It is difficult to find accounts, letters or articles in popular or anthropological journals which do not mention the allegedly different races of Hutu and Tutsi, the latter's dominance, aristocratic behaviour and natural skills and aptitudes as rulers of the country, their arrogance and genius. The narrative about the Hamitic rulers, who conquered the country from the North was omnipresent and no one challenged it. Sometimes, like in Czekanowski's case, an author just does not refer to it, because he might not share its basics or because it was just not his topic.

The omnipresence of the myth inclined many empirical researchers to categorise the population immediately into Hutu and Tutsi and to project the ethnic cleavage they found during and after the 1930s into the past, sometimes a very distant past. The pitfall of such an approach became apparent (but was hardly ever discussed) in two contradictions. First, everybody knew that clans (amwoko) were multi-ethnic (or, as one would say back then: multi-racial) and consisted of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa ancestors. At the same time, some clans – like the *abagesera* in Gisaka – who did not see themselves as Hutu or Tutsi³⁰⁶ – were

305 A most recent and very informative work is Chrétien, Jean-Pierre and Kabanda, Marcel: *Rwanda, racisme et génocide: L'idéologie hamitique*. Paris: Belin 2016.

306 Nyagahene, Antoine: *Histoire et peuplement. Ethnies, Clans et Lignages dans le Rwanda ancien et contemporain*. Thèse de Doctorat, Université Paris 7, Paris 1997, 248.

regarded as “Hutu”³⁰⁷ by some and “Tutsi”³⁰⁸ by other researchers, an apparent contradiction to the assumption of clans’ multi-ethnic character. In one case, an author even declared the *abagesera* Hutu and Tutsi in the same monograph.³⁰⁹ Since the *abagesera* had gained the right to propose a king mother, they belonged to the *abanyiginya* system of governance, which originally transcended the Hutu, Tutsi, Twa divisions. Because the Hamitic myth bolstered the legitimacy of Tutsi rule, Tutsi authors often endorsed it, declaring, like Alexis Kagame, all clans belonging to the *abanyiginya* system “Tutsi” and re-interpreting the monarchy as a Tutsi institution. This, in return, facilitated the Hutu movement in the late colonial era and after independence to reject the monarchy as a Tutsi vehicle for the oppression of the Hutu. However, cases like the Bushi on the western shore of Lake Kivu, who regarded themselves as *abanyiginya*, but avoided calling themselves Hutu or Tutsi,³¹⁰ demonstrate how little sense it makes to equal the monarchy and the *abanyiginya* tradition with “the Tutsi” alone.

Despite their initial mistrust towards the Tutsi in the early period of Belgian rule (when the royal court and the Tutsi chiefs rejected conversion to Catholicism and the Church was mainly a Hutu church) and their endorsement of the Tutsi after the so-called “tornado”, the mass conversion of Tutsi chiefs and their integration into colonial governance, the White Fathers did a lot, willingly or not, to establish the popular conviction about the monarchy as a Tutsi institution. This was a by-product of the Hamitic myth.

Superstition versus religious truth

The second trap of taking missionary accounts literally concerns the verbatim endorsement of their accounts. Their reports, letters, diaries and chronicles are full of heart-rending stories about conversions, naïve natives who fell into the trap of their own superstition. A general dividing line runs through these accounts between (Catholic) “belief” on the one hand and “native superstition” on the other side. This line blurs the view on the social function of traditional Rwandan myths, legends, the *Kubandwa* belief system and the role of (traditional) religion,

307 Sandrart, Georges: *Cours de droit coutumier*. Astrida: Groupe scolaire d'Astrida 1939, 113.

308 Kagame, Alexis: *Inganji Karinga I*, Kabgayi [no publishing house] 1959, 38.

309 Pagès, Albert: *Un royaume hamite au centre de l'Afrique*. Bruxelles: Académie royale des sciences d'outre-mer. Classe des sciences morales et politiques 1933, 45, 461.

310 Kagabo, Jean-Marie: *Democratic Engineering in Rwanda and Burundi*. Oxford: African Books Collective 2019, 95.

imyizerere for the containment of intra-group and inter-group violence, the diversion of violence away from the group. According to these accounts, rainmakers pretend to make rain and thus take advantage on their superstitious fellow countrymen, exploiting and abusing them. Their social function to divert violence away from these countrymen and on the rainmakers during droughts were never considered. Young girls “find God”, endorse “the truth” and leave superstition behind, staying at the missions. The missionaries did not even contemplate the impact on social relations in Rwandan society when important chiefs did the same. In fact, at least beginning from the arrival of the White Sisters in 1908 the congregation became a focal point for the emancipation of young girls from their families and an early access point to education – but the mission did not even emphasize it in the discussion of the congregation’s role in the ethnic violence. The latter aspect is also absent from almost all works discussing the impact of the Catholic Church on Rwandan society (before and after independence).

The gender gap in early colonial history

But besides the rather modest White Sister archive in Rome, which contains reports and diaries, almost all (and between 1900 and 1908 all) sources produced by anthropologists, missionaries or other, were produced by men, European or Rwandan³¹¹, they mostly told stories about other men, and they told them to men. Not even the first women researchers dealing with Rwandan history were much interested in gender and sex relations; instead, they concentrated on the (male dominated) political establishment, colonial politics, and the ethnic cleavages. This interplay creates the strange situation according to which men tell us about the customs and habits of women, sex, procreation, household matters and women’s everyday life. Czekanowski was the only one who openly mentioned this very limited access to women in his reports, but even he did not question the information about women he received from missionaries and Rwandan men. This was no better when Belgian officers, missionaries, and anthropologists started to penetrate Rwanda. The male bias on Rwandan gender relations leaves us with many puzzles. One of them is the pre-colonial Rwanda’s hostility towards twins, for which there is no biological reason. Neither is there any biological reason for aborting or killing babies during the mother’s lactation

311 The first written text from a Rwandan (black) seminarist stems from 1911 and was reproduced in Minnaert, *Ecrits de Mgr Hirth*, tome 1, 1900–1905, 305–404. His name was Balthazar Gafuku and he studied in Tanganyika.

period. Reports about the habit of killing twins and second-born children while the mother was still breastfeeding can be the result of Rwandans' superstition, but they can also be the result of European prejudice about Rwandans and their superstition, or the consequence of events or beliefs which were utterly unrelated to biology or superstition. But because we don't have female sources about the matter, we are unable to draw any consistent conclusion. Czekanowski claimed that the habit of killing twins was the result of the mother's incapacity to feed two babies at the same time, which is biologically unsound. But he got the information on the ground. Even if it were second-hand or hearsay, it must have come from missionaries (and might have come from Schumacher)³¹² who were quite close to ordinary Rwandans. Almost half a century later, Alexis Kagame confirmed Czekanowski's assumptions only partly: twins were not killed as such, they were treated equally with great precision and dedication, but if one of the twins was female, she could live while her twin brother was killed, "because the girl was regarded as a providence".³¹³ The explanation is far from conclusive, but we have to keep in mind that Czekanowski described the situation he found at the beginning of the twentieth century among ordinary Rwandans, while Kagame presented his retrospective knowledge from the perspective of a member of the cultural and political elite of the country. And both were men for whom the twin issue was a minor one. In addition, Kagame and most anthropologists at that time used to think in static categories and ignored change over time. If ordinary Rwandans' treatment of twins changed over time, they would not have revealed it.

Missionaries' own political agenda

From the very beginning, the White Fathers had their own political agenda. This is true regarding the overall plan, which Cardinal Lavigerie and after him Lavin-hac and Hirth shared: to turn Rwanda into an African Catholic kingdom in a top-down process through the conversion of the king and his notables to what they saw as the right faith. But there were also smaller plans, elaborated on the ground once the missionaries had arrived on the spot and needed to find their

312 The Schumacher collection at Missio Aachen (the former White Father archive from Trier) contains correspondence indicating the two knew each other personally and had met in Africa.

313 Kagame, Alexis: *Les organisations socio-familiales de l'ancien Rwanda*. Bruxelles: Institut Royale Colonial Belge 1954, 242.

place between the German administration, in the balance of power among the local hill chiefs and between the small independent kingdoms in the North and Northwest on the one hand and the court in Nyanza on the other hand. And it was there, when some missionaries' political agenda began to impact on the way, they presented Rwandan history to the outside world. One of the events which illustrated this political agenda, were the events around Rwaza, one of the first mission stations the White Fathers had built in Rwanda. Rwaza was situated in the mountainous area of the great volcanos in the North. The Fathers had erected it without Musinga's permission, because the territory was no longer under the royal court's control. Local lineages wielded power there, they had cleared the forests and had given the land to their kin. They violently opposed every attempt from Nyanza to send abatutsi notables to their hills and mountains who would collect taxes for the king (and themselves), dispossess the local lineage heads of their land and distribute it to their acolytes. For the court notables, these lineage heads were *abahutu*, although at least some of them enjoyed a similar reputation and wealth as the abatutsi notables in central Rwanda. At the court, they were often labelled *abahinzi* or *abagome*, both meaning rebels. But at least some of these northern lineage heads ran their lands and their followers like kings. Their power was not only rooted in brute force and the ability to amass surpluses by raiding their kin and smaller lineages, but on traditional legitimacy, too: some were regarded as rainmakers, sorcerers who could prevent natural disasters and scare off grasshopper invasions. In addition, they had their own succession rules and traditions – similar to the *abanyiginya* esoteric code.

When the White Fathers erected their mission station in Rwaza, the local lineages must have regarded them as either royal envoys and a sort of pale *abatutsi*, who wanted to deprive them of their land or as powerful sorcerers and rainmakers, whose power they could use against the king.

In 1904, three events converged in Rwaza. First, there seemed to be some kind of spill-over from the Maji-Maji uprising in Tanganyika. The uprising itself erupted a year later, but the Maji-Maji envoys were already spreading their message to the local population. Its most important element was the claim, according to which the holy water (Maji-Maji) would render warriors immune against the German bullets. Despite the geological, administrative and political boundaries that severed Rwanda from the rest of German East Africa, the same elements also showed up in missionary reports from 1904: the link between water and immunity from German bullets.³¹⁴ This went together with propaganda spread by

314 The narrative in Rwanda about water and bullets was a bit different from Tanganyika.

the royal court and the anti-European notables, according to which the German military commander, von Grawert, had been killed leaving the White Father missions vulnerable.

In result, the locals laid siege to Rwaza, forcing the missionaries to transform their station into a fortress-like compound. Their fate would have been sealed without Nyundo station's armed assistance. The fathers Brard and Loupias came with their Baganda troops to Rwaza's rescue and bishop Hirth urged German troops from Bukoba to intervene. Together with the German troops, the fathers and their Baganda carried out "punitive raids" against the *abakiga*, quashing the riot against the mission.

This at least is the story as the Rwaza diary, the mission chronicles and historians, who analyzed them, used to tell. Des Forges claimed, the *abakiga* – who were Hutu and rebels for the royal court – had moved against the mission because the latter had behaved like royal *abatutsi* envoys. At the same time, the attacks had started because of *abatutsi* propaganda against the Europeans, instigated by the anti-European Kabare faction at the court.³¹⁵ But why would *abakiga*, who hated the court as much as the *abatutsi* it sent as tax-collecting envoys, act according to court propaganda? Why would they move against allegedly vulnerable missions, if they regarded them as potential allies against the court? Based on those documents that were produced by the missionaries for a limited audience (other missionaries and the superiors in Marienburg and Algiers) or for the public (the *Afrika-Bote*), it is impossible to solve that enigma. The internal correspondence, which Minnaert has recently published, paints a more detailed and less mysterious picture.³¹⁶ The *abakiga* lineages had not attacked the mission because of the court propaganda, but because of their own grievances against the fathers, whom they indeed suspected to act like *abatutsi*. Motivated either by

There, holy water was said to give immunity against German bullets, in Rwanda, the allegation was about German rifles "spitting only water" (instead of bullets). The sense was the same: those who moved against the Europeans would not run the risk of being killed by their weaponry. Diaire de Rwaza 1903–1910, Archive des Peres Blancs, Rome, Sept. 1904, 21–22, quoted according to Minnaert, *le Rwanda vu par le Père Brard*, 155.

315 Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News*, 50–51, Kabagema, Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft 89–92.

316 Minnaert, *Recueil d'articles*, 155–158; Minnaert, Stefaan: « Les Pères Blancs et la société rwandaise durant l'époque coloniale allemande (1900–1916). » Une rencontre entre cultures et religions in: *Les Religions au Rwanda, défis, convergences et compétitions, Actes du Colloque International du 18–19 septembre 2008 à Butare/Huye*, Éditions de l'Université Nationale du Rwanda septembre 2009, 53–101.

misunderstandings or their own greed, the missionaries at Rwaza had extracted, confiscated or otherwise taken cattle, land and wood and urged the local chiefs to deliver labour to build their huts and houses. Then, due to the intervention of the Nyundo Baganda they had quashed the violent protest and carried out raids into Mulera, leaving behind burning villages, corpses and looted homesteads.³¹⁷ When von Grawert finally arrived, they claimed they had been attacked but remained silent about their own retaliation and – in order to conceal their atrocities – showed the German military around in areas they had not demolished. Hence, the Germans retaliated against villages, which had not taken part in the revolt, upsetting *abakiga* against the missionaries who had had no grievances against the mission. As a result, several missionaries were attacked on their way back to Nyundo, some hardly escaping with their life.

The events divided the fathers at Rwaza deeply. When the *vicariat* later sent a *visiteur* to Rwanda to investigate the matter, he discovered a lack of “charity” among the missionaries in Rwaza and left them an instruction, which strongly urged them to change their comport. The instruction read like an indictment. The author, Père Malet, the *visiteur* did not explicitly state the missionaries had committed atrocities, robbed the locals, meddled into politics and carried out raids far away from the mission, he just urged them to refrain from such actions in the future.³¹⁸

In his correspondence with Livinhac, he explicitly claimed, Rwaza had manipulated the German troops to punish innocent villagers to cover up the missionaries’ own atrocities.³¹⁹ From the records, it becomes apparent the missionaries had feared, the Germans would expel them from Rwanda if they learnt about their punitive raids and cattle confiscations.³²⁰

317 Lettre de Mgr Hirth du 25 mars 1908 au P. Loupias, APB N.098031 quoted according to Minnaert, *Recueil d'articles*, 158.

318 He did so in a separate report to his superiors, see Stefaan Minnaert’s chapter in this book.

319 Lettre de Mgr Hirth du 25 mars 1908 au P. Loupias, APB N.098031 quoted according to Minnaert, *Recueil d'articles*, 158. See also the *carte de visite* which the *visiteur*, Père Malet, left in Rwaza in Minnaert, *Recueil d'articles*, 164–175.

320 The claim about the cover-up to avoid expulsion by the Germans stems from 1910. According to the German records, the German administration never contemplated to expel the White Father mission as such from Rwanda (instead, they sometimes urged the mission superiors to withdraw individual missionaries), but the mission might not be aware of that and therefore, the fear of expulsion might have well been realistic from the mission’s point of view, even in 1904.

Conversion by brute force

The reason for the Rwaza raids was material: the missionaries and their Ganda looted the local population to punish it for the refusal to carry out forced labour for the mission and they did not come back with more followers, but with cattle they had robbed from the locals. The raids poisoned the mission relations with the local lineages for years and could hardly be expected to increase the number of converts in the region. But the congregation also meted out more selective violence to spread the faith: by kidnapping children, deceiving the *amazu* in their neighbourhood and intimidating opponents of the mission.

The mission had entered the country heavy-handed, and in its field work the sword was just as present as the bible. Sava was created with the help of a heavily armed Ganda detachment which had protected the missionaries from attacks during the religious war in Uganda. It looked like a fortress. Until 1903, the Ganda did the catechist work, often in Swahili or a mixture of Swahili and Kinyarwanda and with rude and reckless methods.³²¹

The White Fathers also had weapons and used them, only on a smaller scale than the Germans and, because of their ambition to enlighten, persuade, and convert the Rwandans, they did everything to obscure their methods. While German officers and soldiers were eager to emphasize their cruelty and determination in dealing with rebels, the White Father publications do not reveal any attempts to convert the local population through coercion and violence. They mentioned attacks on missions only sparsely; never did they elaborate on their defence measures or revenge actions.

In a report from Bukoba, based on a German officer's personal investigation on the spot, the *Kaiserliche Gouvernement* in Daressalam learned how the missionaries had enraged the locals with their insensitive conduct. The former station chief, Oberleutnant Willibald von Stuemer, had concluded an agreement with the White Fathers granting them a two-hectare banana plantation. Under normal circumstances, the land strip would be big enough to feed between 6 and 12 families. But the Fathers had given it to a local teacher and another mission member, both pupils of the mission. These had first chased away the families that had made use of the banana trees. These families went to relatives who helped them out until they would be able to erect a banana plantation elsewhere. But instead of using the bananas for the use of all, the two mission men had let two thirds of the banana trees decay and used only the last third for their own

321 Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoir*, 55–56.

benefit. They sold the surplus instead of giving it to the local population. In other words, they had devastated the land and the trees they had received and had outraged the local population with their ruthless conduct. They had even violated the agreement concluded with the station, because the latter had provided for the local chief to retain ownership over the banana strip. The whole affair was finally solved by the commander of the Schutztruppe, Major Kurt von Schweinitz, who ordered the station chief in Bukoba, Oberleutnant Wilhelm Göring, to facilitate the return of the expropriated residents to their banana strip.³²² Göring later filed a similar account of the events, written in an emotional language which revealed his outrage about the Fathers' conduct.³²³

Another example was more severe than the misuse of the plantation. It stems from the diary of Oskar Schindelaar, an Austrian army defector and trader who had managed to get to Rwanda. The German police later arrested him in Daressalam and confiscated the diary which, according to the court, contained information about corruption among German colonial officers. The German authorities deported Oskar Schindelaar from the colony, but the court sent his diary to the *Gouvernement* administration which archived it.³²⁴ Schindelaar despised and hated the White Fathers. He disliked their allegedly lavish lifestyle, the way they despised and abused the natives (which was not unlike his attitude)³²⁵, but during his journey he had gathered more information about the mission's advance than the German authorities had. He was aware that the

322 NAT G 61 / 19, "weiße Väter" 1902–1904. Wilhelm Göring was a half-brother to the later commander of the German Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring, they both had the same mother, but different fathers.

323 NAT G61-19, Letter from Bukoba to Daressalam 5.2.1904.

324 And that seemed to be the reason why I found the diary in the National Archives of Tanzania almost a hundred years later. According to the court, Schindelaar had multiple convictions, the most recent being a three-year verdict for desertion from the army of Austria-Hungary. From the documents it is not clear why he had been arrested. "Kaiserlicher Bezirksrichter Daressalam 31.10.1905 an das Gouvernement." NAT G 9/19, "Weiße Väter" 1902–1908. The Schindelaar case is shortly mentioned in Des Forges, *Death Is the Only Bad News*, 54–55. According to her, there was also a South African trader called Pretorius who defied the German ban on European settlements in Rwanda.

325 According to Mamdani, Mahmood: *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 96, Schindelaar and a South African trader named Pretorius robbed local cattle breeders at gunpoint after Musinga had issued a ban on selling cattle.

Fathers had created a kind of embassy at the court in Nyanza,³²⁶ which had the task of teaching the king Swahili and attending all *schauris* in order to inform the mission about them.³²⁷ This information was then very swiftly passed to the other mission stations. On the shore of Lake Kivu, Schindelaar found Father Barthélemy who had established his own little fiefdom there, from which he raided neighbouring “Watuale” (which most likely meant *abatware*, local chiefs), robbing them of their cattle.³²⁸ To avoid problems with the Germans, he sent half of the cattle to Musinga, thus making sure that the king’s subjects would not complain about his behaviour to the German authorities. The case is a rare example of a missionary paying a kind of tribute to Musinga.³²⁹ A few years before, Father Bartholomé had been the object of several inquiries of the German administration according to which he had conducted his own politics and interfered in conflicts between local chieftains. One report even claimed that he had “not refrained from taking the law into his own hands and settling private quarrels with his private army.”³³⁰ Such a conduct was far from being the exception to the rule, as the internal correspondence of the mission reveals. The Germans spoke about a “whole Brard school”³³¹ of terrorizing the local population and wanted Bartholomé expelled from the colony, because he had personally taken revenge for the murder of a native assistant.³³² According to the internal White Father correspondence, Brard had problems with drinking and violence, he suffered from renal colic and insomnia, which he tried to ease by drinking large quantities of sorghum beer before going to bed.³³³

During his voyage through Rwanda, Schindelaar realized that whenever he tried to enter into transactions with or impose his will on natives, missionaries

326 He called the station “Isavi”, but most probably meant “Sava” which fits into his geographical description (close to Nyanza).

327 Schauris was the Germanized version of the Swahili word for “trial” or “court session.”

328 Schindelaar regarded Bartholomé as a Jesuit, but he was a White Father who had come to Rwanda from Uganda. Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoir*, 65–66.

329 According to the diary, the case took place close to the Schengi, the German military outpost at the lake which Schindelaar named “Schengi”. NAT G69-18. Several letters between Hirth and Graewert in 1901 and 1902.

330 NAT G9-19, Bezirkschef Graewert to bishop Hirth 1.9.1901 and letter from the Governor in Daressalam to bishop Hirt about the same issue, from 12.2.1902.

331 Alphonse Brard was a White Father who had come to Rwanda from Uganda.

332 Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoir*, 65–68; for the revenge story see also Stefaan Minnaert’s chapter in this book.

333 Minnaert, *Histoire de l’évangélisation du Rwanda*, 138–143.

would come and pretend to protect and represent the local natives and accuse him of abuses at the German station in Usumbura. Schindelaar quickly learnt that pretending to despise the Germans made the missionaries much more friendly and cooperative, and inclined them to share gossip with him which always tended to ridicule the Germans. They even mocked the German resident in Usumbura who had equipped them with firearms, as a pathetic person whom the natives regarded as “Musinga’s boy”.³³⁴ Schindelaar’s diary also contained information about the way the White Fathers used to recruit their disciples and how this undermined the power of the local chieftains. Reports from German outposts in Bukoba and Usumbura corroborated the information. Before the arrival of the mission, peasants could only compensate bad harvests by asking their chiefs to share their food (which nominally belonged to the king). From the very beginning, the White Fathers created their own plantations and stored food on their own. In times of starvation, they could distribute it, but forced the beneficiaries to work in the mission plantations, parts of which were also cultivated by their disciples. This sent a clear message to the poor: becoming Christian would give them more autonomy from their chiefs and access to food which their chieftains could no longer control. For wealthier Rwandans, no matter whether cattle holders or farmers, this system was less attractive. For them, the mission was interesting because it constituted an additional factor of power which they could use against the court and the Germans, if necessary. But it was also a threat to their power over the peasants.³³⁵

Conclusion

The White Fathers’ publications and even a part of their internal documents (like the diaries and mission station chronicles) are valuable records about early colonial times in Rwanda, which often contain information which is unavailable from elsewhere. Opposite to the Germans and the later arriving protestant missions, the White Fathers had a dense network of contacts in Rwanda, they had

334 The original phrase in the diary is “Missinga”. Schindelaar’s claims about the Usumbura-resident’s poor reputation (and probably also the information about the firearms) were the reason why the judge in Daressalam had sent the report to the *Kaiserliches Gouvernement*.

335 Missionaries gave gifts to Musinga when they paid a visit to the court, but they did not pay taxes (as a share of their harvest). The diary does not explain how the Fathers’ contribution fit into Rwandan customary law at that time.

insights into Rwandans' every day life, customs and habits and the working of the Rwandan economy.

But these accounts must be taken with several grains of salt: they are usually deprived of any hints to violence meted out by the missionaries, strong racist prejudices permeate them and contributed to reinforce the antagonism between rebellious *abakiga* and the royal court and its *abatutsi* envoys in Mulera. The accounts are also often superseded by the missionaries' own agenda in conflicts with the German administration and the mission superiors in Tanganyika and Algiers, but also between the mission stations and the local chiefs and lineage heads or – as internal records whose publication was never envisaged demonstrate – even among missionaries. The White Fathers also tended to interpret Rwandans' customs and habits from their own religious perspective and their conversion objectives only, forgetting the social functions these allegedly only superstitious rituals had for Rwandan society. And their accounts include a strong gender gap, which leaves us with many puzzles and which also proliferated into scientific accounts of authors, who did not reveal their sources, like the example of Jan Czekanowski has shown.

Stefaan Minnaert

8. The White Fathers and Rwandan Society during the German colonial period (1900–1916)

The topic of this article concerns the beginning of the evangelization of Rwanda during the German colonial era, from 1900 to 1916. This period is well known by historians. This may give the impression that everything has been said. But in the realm of history nothing is definitive.

Sometimes it is necessary to question the so-called “historical truths”. For this questioning I used the documents from the archives of the White Fathers (Missionaries of Afrika) preserved in Rome (A.G.M.Afr.)³³⁶.

Historical sources

Allow me first to give you a small overview of the documents I have consulted. Among them are the diaries³³⁷, the correspondence of the major superiors, the instructions of Cardinal Lavigerie and those of Bishop Hirth, the studies of Fr. Brard, Fr. Classe and Fr. Loupias, the letters of rule, the letters of Bishop Hirth and Fr. Lecoindre to their families, and the publications of the White Fathers. It is a pity that Bishop Hirth burned his personal correspondence as well as part of that of his successor, Bishop Classe.

To make a good reading of these documents it is important to know the White Fathers. In fact, it is very easy to interpret them in a clumsy way. The study of

336 This article is the summary of the presentation of the topic, I have given during the symposium held in Butare in 2008 (Minnaert, Stefaan: “Les Pères Blancs et la société rwandaise durant l’époque coloniale allemande (1900–1916). Une rencontre entre cultures et religions – The White Fathers and Rwandan society during the German colonial era (1900–1916). A meeting between cultures and religions”, in *Les Religions au Rwanda, défis, convergences et compétitions*, Actes du Colloque International du 18–19 septembre 2008 à Butare/Huye, Editions de l’Université Nationale du Rwanda, September 2009, 53–101). The original version of the article was written in French.

337 The word “diary” (diaire) was created by the White Fathers. It does not exist in the French language. It is derived from the Latin “dies – jour”, which in English gives the word “diary”. The word “diary” means mission journal.

Lavigerie's instructions is not enough. Each document produced by a White Father reflects the personality of its author who observes reality with his history, his ideas, his emotions, his illnesses, his successes, his frustrations, etc. An idea expressed in a letter is not necessarily followed by its implementation. Bishop Hirth, for example, advises his confreres to start the evangelization of Rwanda with the *Bahutu*, whom he identifies with the poor of the Gospel. In reality, this advice was never implemented.

It is necessary to systematically explore the files to find unknown documents of great importance. By chance I found two letters from the explorer Kandt³³⁸. Now we know that it was he who opened the doors of the country to the White Fathers. Recently I discovered that Bishop Hirth, in September 1903, brought fourteen girls from Rwanda to Marienberg, near Bukoba³³⁹, for a year's formation with the White Sisters³⁴⁰; the experience ended after a few months. I also

338 Copy of Dr. Richard Kandt's letters of 7 June 1899 and 6 March 1900 to Bishop Gerboin, A.G. M.Afr., N° 100164–100165 and N° 099074.

339 In April 1901, Bishop Hirth left Kamoga and moved to Marienberg.

340 The diary of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa in Marienberg tells us: "9/08/1903 – (...) Elisa and Philomena leave for Rwanda, from where they will bring back the future novices, chosen by the Bishop, who is on a pastoral tour there. Their journey will last more than fifteen days (...). 15/09/1903 – From the morning, our children are in a state of excitement: 'Elisa and Philoména are going to arrive with the Balaluhanda [Banyarwanda], we are going to wait for them!' They bring fourteen girls from the best families, who come to spend a year with us, after which they return home; their air, their hairstyles shaved into spirals or other singular shapes, give them the appearance of real black ladies. Some of them were quite ill during the journey, and two are still very tired (...). 18/09/1903 – The children of Rwanda fall ill: two, then three are taken with a high fever by the climate; they acclimatise with difficulty in our countries. 19/09/1903 – Feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows (...). Our Balaluhandas are all tired; several of them take a vomitory, but it is comical to see all their grimaces; they hide and run away, so afraid are they of this famous remedy (...). 28/09/1903 – (...). **The girls from RWANDA will be baptized tomorrow; they were prepared by Fr. Classe, who came from their country, because they do not understand Rusiba.** 29/09/1903 – Baptism of the Balaluhanda. One of them, very ill, cannot support herself during the ceremony; her godmother comes to her aid each time it is her turn (...). 25/12/1903 – (...). Our Balaluhanda children, baptized in October as well as those baptized yesterday, have the joy of making their First Communion (...). 10/02/1904 – Visit of Fr. Pouget, who came from Rwanda (...). Our daughters from Rwanda are running to see their Baptismal Father; they are going back to their country, because here they are always sick; in Rwanda they have a better climate and better food (...) 15/02/1904 – (...). The girls from Rwanda are returning to their country. One of the

discovered the damning report of the *régional*, Fr. Malet, concerning the events in Rwaza between 1904 and 1908³⁴¹.

One has to compare the different sources to see if the truth has been respected or if it has been obscured. In this area, one must be extremely careful in the use of diaries. In general, they have been kept by the superiors of the post. It is they who present the facts from their point of view. I found that some very important events were not recorded. This is not due to an oversight! Already at that time, the major superiors noticed that the diaries were not always very clear. The Rwaza diary is a good example. In the past, historians did not realize that its author concealed the truth about the tragic events of 1904³⁴².

“When I went to Rwasa at the end of July 1909, I did not see anything very clear in all these stories, the diaries are not very clear, and as I see, they tried not to be very clear in words. I proposed to study these stories bit by bit, piece by piece. The Durand story happened after I was there. Fr. Classe was there last January: not a word about all that, and until today not a word. The Durand story concerns the murder of a sorcerer by Christians from Rwasa”³⁴³.

“I think very highly of Father Classe because of his virtue, his intelligence, his spirit of faith, but it seems to me that more and more his reports to his superiors are not objective enough; he is afraid, it seems, of hurting them. I don’t think it’s a bad intention on his part at all, it’s a misplaced delicacy. I had noticed this, and that is why I said in one of my previous letters to Your Grace, that Bishop Hirth did not know enough about the facts that happened in Rwasa at the beginning of this mission”³⁴⁴.

“...Fr. Classe does not make his Superiors sufficiently aware of what concerns them. He seems to assume that they are already aware; he is content to express appreciations, judgements, instead of giving the facts and leaving it to the Superiors to appreciate and judge. Others, perhaps more malicious, would say that he seeks to lead his superiors in any direction he pleases”³⁴⁵.

most determined was Theresa, who went to beg Her Grandeur to allow her to stay with the Sisters. When she refused, she came to bid us farewell in tears, promising, as did others, to return later. We had great hopes for this child” (A.G. M.Afr., Journal of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa: September 1903 – February 1904).

341 Fr. Malet’s report of 1909, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098414–098416 (see document N° 2 in the annex).

342 Letter from Brother Herménégilde dated August 25, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 070825 (see annex n° 1).

343 Note from Fr. Léonard dated 22 December, 1909 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096617.

344 Letter from Fr. Léonard dated June 24, 1910 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096663.

345 Note from Fr. Léonard dated July 5, 1910 concerning Fr. Hurel’s directory, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096623.

In addition, the diary of the Nyundo foundation has disappeared. Thus, I wonder if we should not rewrite the history of northern Rwanda and see the assassination of Fr. Loupias in a different light³⁴⁶.

Reading the documents, I have questions about the image we have of certain historical figures. I am thinking of Frs. Brard and Huntziger on the White Fathers' side and King Musinga on the Rwandan side. Does the image we have of them correspond to reality? Have they not been victims of slander campaigns? I am not going back to the fact that King Musinga gave a "superb" elephant tusk to Fr. Brard in 1905 as a farewell gift³⁴⁷. It was a royal gift. So, the relationship between these two men was not as bad as some people sometimes suggest.

Difficulty in writing the history of the mission

It is difficult to write a history of the evangelization of Rwanda. The country's past is haunted by hundreds of thousands of deaths that lie in our memories. We also know that it was primarily instrumentalized by the West. My ancestors did not set an example in this area. In their publications, they gave themselves the good role to justify their socio-political interventions. And they wanted to impress their readers to find vocations and money. A Berber proverb says it well: "History is the handle of the sword, everything depends on the hand that holds it".

The fact remains that history is inhabited by the demand for truth³⁴⁸. Thanks to this demand, the historian can achieve the greatness of his discipline. What attitude will he take towards the past? Is it that of a vigilante who accuses, or that of a peacemaker, who pacifies the memory of the dead by pacifying the living? History, according to the historian Boutry, must "strive to give the sources an intelligibility that is neither that of the actors, nor dictated by the dominant ideology, nor motivated by its own passions".

These are some of the thoughts I had while preparing my topic: *The White Fathers and Rwandan society during the German colonial period (1900–1916): an encounter between cultures and religions*. I studied the subject from four different angles which I call the four dimensions of the mission, namely ideological, political, economic and socio-cultural. Between these four dimensions there is an

346 Fr. Malet's report of 1909, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098414–098416 (see document N° 2 in the appendix).

347 Heremans, Roger and Ntezimana, Emanuel: *Journal de la Mission de Save (1899–1905)*, Ruhengeri, 1987, 149.

348 Semelin, J.: 'The historian can contribute to pacifying memories', in *La Croix*, 02/04/2008.

interaction. Given the time available, I am obliged to present only a few important points at the risk of generalizing.

The ideological dimension

The missionary vision of the first White Fathers to arrive in Rwanda dated back to before the Council of Trent (1545). It was based on the principle: "Outside the Church there is no salvation"³⁴⁹. The aim of the mission was then to save souls. And to save one's soul, the person had to know the creed, receive the sacraments (baptism in particular), practice the Ten Commandments and recite the prayers. It was not until 1919 that Pope Benedict XV put the proclamation of Jesus Christ at the heart of the mission³⁵⁰. The theological training of the first White Fathers was roughly the same as that given in the seminaries of France in the nineteenth century³⁵¹. They read the Bible in a literal way, distrusting modern science. During their training, they had read the writings of the explorers of the African continent. As a result, they followed the prejudices of these explorers and their false interpretations (the Hamite hypothesis³⁵² and the Kabyle hypothesis³⁵³).

The early White Fathers had great veneration for their founder, Lavigerie, who died in 1892. They shared his dreams and ambitions: to re-establish the ancient Church of North Africa and evangelize sub-Saharan Africa. They had a negative image of Africa, one that evoked "superstition, polygamy, despotism and slavery"³⁵⁴. For them, Blacks were the cursed sons of Ham with no religion or morals³⁵⁵. They considered them as "inferior beings", without rights, and "who

349 This formula comes from St Cyprian (c.200-258), bishop of Carthage.

350 Gahungu, Méthode: *La formation dans les séminaires en Afrique, Pédagogie des Pères Blancs*, Paris, 2007, 216–217.

351 On the other hand, Lavigerie asked them to emphasize the supernatural side of religion: "its miracles, its wonders, the marvellous effects of its prayers and sacraments and forbade them to present Christian truths in an overly philosophical manner and to propagate the prejudices of Jansenism" (Cardinal Lavigerie: *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, Namur 1950, 169–172).

352 Mamdani, Mahmood: *When Victims Become Killers. Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001, 41–75.

353 Chakers, S.: "Berbers – Berber Language, Myths (often) stronger than reality", in *Berbers or Arabs? Le tango des spécialistes*, Paris 2006, 137–154.

354 *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 159, May – June 1903, 102.

355 Cardinal Lavigerie: *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, 107. Gahungu, Méthode: *Forming Priests in Africa. Le rôle des Pères Blancs (1879–1936)*, Paris 2008, 80–85.

could only be wrong”³⁵⁶. Lavigerie had asked his missionaries to love these “great children”, but also to be firm with them³⁵⁷. The idea of “firmness” is also found in the Gospel of St. Luke³⁵⁸; it was applied by St. Augustine. A good number of White Fathers will misunderstand it. They will think that force is allowed to bring the Blacks to faith and to keep them in religious practice:

“They say that if we could rely on the native, on his reason, on his sense of personal responsibility, on his good feelings, yes, then we could lead him by kindness, gentleness, persuasion, without resorting to force and means of coercion. But the native is a barbarian, and a barbarian too used to the regime of force to allow himself to be subjugated by gentleness. On the contrary, he submits to the tyranny of his chief as a law of nature. It is therefore a waste of time and effort to persist for years in trying to insinuate ourselves by our patient kindness into the minds and hearts of a people who refuse to listen to us. What it needs is the ‘compelle intrare – bring in the people by force’ of the Gospel parable (Luke 14:23: the guests at the feast). When one has such ideas, one naturally takes on the appearance of a master, a conqueror, a haughty manner, a commander’s tone. One organizes the life of the mission, the enclosure and the visiting rooms, the school and the dispensary, the catechisms and the public worship, with regulations as strict and as meticulous as those of a religious novitiate. There was even no scruple about leaving the spiritual domain and interfering in village life, to impose prohibitions and prescriptions which were considered favorable to the work of the mission, without concern for the chiefs and opinion, on the pretext that the temporal should be at the service of the spiritual. And beware of recalcitrant! An iron fist was used to maintain ‘order’, and there was no lack of coercive means – not excluding corporal punishment – to punish delinquents. Provided that the Administration (civil or military) lends itself to it – and this happens – recourse will frequently be had to the

356 Fr. Malet’s visiting card for Rwaza, made on 1^{ier} January 1908, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098003–098005.

357 Maze, J.: *Le Père Blanc, missionnaire d’Afrique, à l’école du Cardinal Lavigerie*, Namur 1948, 333: “If the Negroes perceive any weakness of character, they become ungovernable. It is therefore necessary, in treating them gently, never to lack energy, and this energy must go as far as the punishment of the guilty party, so as to impress those who might be tempted to imitate him”.

358 Luke 14:23 (parable of the guests at the feast).

‘secular arm’, to its courts, its fines, its drudgery, its prisons, blessing Providence for this happy meeting of the public authorities with the Mission”³⁵⁹.

The use of force by missionaries was probably encouraged by the example set by some African chiefs. Evangelization through fear and intimidation will be condemned by their major superiors.

The political dimension

It is impossible to understand the history of the White Fathers in Rwanda without taking into account the political context and their membership in a French missionary society³⁶⁰. When they arrived, they had to take into account the indigenous authority and the German colonial authority with interests that were not their own.

The relationship of the White Fathers with the indigenous authority was marked by the failure of Lavigerie’s theory of a “Christian kingdom” in Buganda in 1892³⁶¹. Following this failure, the kings of the Lake Victoria regions no longer wanted the White Fathers in their kingdom; similarly, the Rwandan Court did not want to receive them on visits:

“In Rwanda the events in Uganda are known as in Kiziba and Usui. The Baganda rebels are welcome everywhere in the South by the kinglets; they even arrive here. In Rwanda, as in Kiziba and Usui, the kingpins and their chiefs fear for their authority (or rather for their pleasures) if they allow their subjects to be educated. Hence the persecution that still continues in Kiziba and Usui. The Europeans, happy to find powerful kings, support them. Indeed, only in these three countries do the kings still have real authority. Perhaps these Europeans fear for the colony the troubles that have bloodied Uganda; the persecution still continues”³⁶².

359 Maze, *Le Père Blanc*, 338–339. Fr. Brard knew the expression “compelle intrare” (Heremans, Ntezimana, *le diaire*, 66).

360 The White Fathers settled in the German part of Rwanda in 1900. Between 1885 and 1918, the territory of pre-colonial Rwanda was amputated of three of its northern provinces, namely Bgisha or Bwisha (in DRC), Bufumbira (in Uganda) and almost all of Ndorwa (in Uganda), as well as Ijwi Island (in DRC). See Bishop Classe: *Territoire du Ruanda: limites – extension: 1928 (?)*, A.G. M.Afr., N°00220395.

361 Minnaert, Stefaan: *Premier voyage de Mgr Hirth au Rwanda: Novembre 1899 – Février 1900. Contribution à l’histoire de l’Eglise catholique au Rwanda*, Kigali 2006, 176–190.

362 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

By 1900, the White Fathers had abandoned the idea of founding a Christian kingdom. But they had not given up the idea of one day converting the chiefs to consolidate their work of evangelization³⁶³. In Rwanda, they wanted to start by converting the poor³⁶⁴. To do this, they asked for religious freedom from the local authorities. They obtained it until 1903. In that year, religious freedom was limited to the mass of the population³⁶⁵.

The relationship of the White Fathers with the German colonial authority was a model of ambiguity. In 1899, a German Protestant, the explorer Kandt, had invited them to come to Rwanda to safeguard Berlin's interests, which were then threatened by Brussels and London³⁶⁶. At that time, they had the privilege to settle wherever they wanted. The Court, under German pressure³⁶⁷, agreed, forced by circumstances:

"A few years ago, all these different races: Batousi, Bahoutou, Batoua bowed under the iron hand of the old king Louabougiri; today his son Youhi no longer governs; it is his mother and his maternal uncle Kabalé who hold the reins of government, but not without many difficulties. **Hence the unease and a kind of anarchy that have contributed to our installation**"³⁶⁸.

The French White Fathers were surprised to find such an attitude among the Germans, whom they distrusted. The Germans had annexed part of their homeland (1871) and were making life difficult for them in the Bukoba district³⁶⁹.

From 1900 to 1908, the White Fathers worked without too many difficulties. They were not bothered by either the Muslims or the Protestants. They founded

363 Cardinal Lavigerie, *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, 112–114. Visiting card of Fr. Malet for Save, made on 14 November 1907, A.G. M.Afr., N° 97/51. The White Fathers were familiar with the principle of "Cujus rex, ejus religio – one practices the religion that the king has chosen" inaugurated in 1648 for the Holy German Empire.

364 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 15, 1900 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° D98.

365 Annual report of Save: 1st July 1903 – 1st July 1904, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, N° 114, March 1905, 139–144: "... the King told us to instruct the Bahutu if we wanted to, but to leave the Batusi alone".

366 Copy of the letter from Dr. Richard Kandt dated June, 7 1899 to Bishop Gerboin, A.G. M.Afr., N° 100164–100165.

367 Letter from Fr. Lecoindre dated October 7, 1903 to his parents, A.G. M.Afr., N° 112021–112026.

368 Undated letter (late 1900?) from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 145, January-February 1901, 8–16.

369 Minnaert, *Premier voyage*, 190–198.

six posts: Save (1900), ZAZA (1900), Nyundo (1901), Rwaza (1903), Mibirisi (1903) and Kabgayi (1906). Thanks to their guns, they imposed themselves in the south with the help of their *Baganda* auxiliaries. In the north, where political anarchy reigned, they imposed themselves by taking part in the struggle between rival clans. As a result, they managed to create a "Catholic clientele". In the vicinity of their posts, they exercise a "royal authority"³⁷⁰ over a population that regards them as "demigods"³⁷¹. Against the advice of their major superiors, they intervene in trials and sometimes replace local chiefs, which offends the Court:

"It is also urgent to recall this precept of the Apostle: *Nemo militans Deo implicet se negotiis saecularibus* – No one who serves God should involve himself in worldly affairs. Missionaries must refrain from regulating or taking in hand the temporal affairs of their neophytes or catechumens, especially if they are of a judicial nature, and even under the pretext of arbitration or pacification, especially now that there is everywhere a European authority, jealous of its prerogatives in this matter. The propaganda, in the place already quoted, expands at length on this defence, and says among other things: *His praeceptis (Apostoli) contradicunt sacerdotes et missionarii qui fidelium sibi subditorum causas quascumque temporales, resque domesticas ad se deferendas volunt quasi essent eorumdem fidelium domini temporales; qui sub praetextu dissidentes componendi, de litibus et controversiis profanis cognoscere et eos dirimere volunt, partesque litigantes et controversantes compellunt, etiam denegatione sacramentorum, stare suo ex iudicio... Haec igitur omnia graviter inhibemus. (No. 19)* – It is contrary to these precepts [of

370 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated October 31, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095141–095143: "At Nyundo, the mission seems to be prospering; but the Superior, Fr. Paul Barthélemy, finds himself in an increasingly false situation. In principle, he has tried too hard to win people over by supporting the poor serfs against their batusi chiefs; the missionaries cannot now conceive of any other kind, and the neophytes lack submission to the established powers ". Letter from Fr. Brard dated February, 8 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523: "Since we have been here, an ox has been stolen, a courier has been robbed and two men have been killed, and at least twenty times our children have been relieved of the few items of cloth they had. I made the king, who never did anything, ask for help; it would have been necessary to be next to him to arouse him; we had to render justice sometimes ourselves, as the government had told us to do, which must have offended the king and the grantees and made them cry usurpation of power. If we had had a station in the capital this would not have happened".

371 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 1st, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 148, July – August 1901, 121–125.

the Apostle] for priests and missionaries to want any temporal causes and domestic matters to be submitted to them as if they were the temporal lords of the faithful; who, under the pretext of reconciling those who are at variance, want to be privy to secular disputes and polemics and want to put an end to them, and they compel the disputing and polemical parties, also by means of the denial of the sacraments, to conform to their judgment... To all this, therefore, we strongly oppose. Finally, in virtue of the same precept of the Apostle, missionaries must absolutely abstain from meddling in any way in matters of civil administration. Here is the ancient rule given by the Holy See on this subject and renewed by it more than once: *Caveant iidem parochi saecularem et regulares ullo modo sese ingerere in rebus spectantibus ad politiam saecularem, nec ullum ad officia publica proponant, quamvis aptior caeteris videatur...* (Coll. No. 129, VIII) – That these same parish priests, secular and regular, beware of imposing themselves in any way whatsoever on matters which concern the secular state, and that they do not propose anyone for official functions even though he appears to be more suitable than the others...”³⁷².

The Court, divided by disputes over succession, was not up to the task of intervening effectively³⁷³. Faced with a fait accompli, it tolerated the White Fathers who served its interests in the north.

“The 1,100 Christians of Issavi and the 700 serious catechumens of the mission are still a *pusillus grex* [small herd] in the midst of the pagans. The small village chiefs put their happiness as in the past in their herds of cows, but at least they do not make any opposition; several even ensure freedom of conscience. The King is also in good relations with the mission; he has never turned away a Father as he did recently with Pastor Johansen who ‘came to catechize him’”³⁷⁴.

In the south, the Court asked them to open a school in Nyanza so that the king and his pages could learn to read, write and speak Kiswahili³⁷⁵. In return, the Court will help the White Fathers to build the churches of Zaza (1906) and

372 Letter from Bishop Livinhac dated April 1st, 1921 to the Missionaries of Kivu, A.G. M.Afr. N° 111373. Translated from the Latin by Fr. P. Horsten (M.Afr.).

373 Mbonimana, Gamaliel: *L'instauration d'un royaume chrétien au Rwanda (1900–1931)*, PhD thesis, Louvain-la-Neuve 1981, 155–190.

374 Letter from Fr. Durand dated August 25, 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097074.

375 Rutayisire, Paul: *La christianisation du Rwanda (1900–1945). Méthode missionnaire et politique selon Mgr Léon Classe*, Fribourg 1987, 71–73.

Save (1907)³⁷⁶. An uncle of the king even invited the Christians to share a calabash of beer as a sign of friendship. The Germans, on the other hand, took a dim view of the White Fathers' interference in the country's affairs. They complained to Bishop Hirth who lived too far away to intervene effectively. They also complained to Berlin, where the work of the White Fathers was well appreciated³⁷⁷: they initiated the population to "a better life", teaching them trades, and they contributed to the pacification of the country by teaching them to submit to all authority³⁷⁸.

From 1908 to 1916, the Germans had the upper hand on the political scene. It is they who now impose their views on the White Fathers. The Imperial Resident, Kandt³⁷⁹, regarded their interference in socio-political life as illegitimate and a threat to his policy of governing the country through indirect rule³⁸⁰. He also took a dim view of their membership in a society that propagated French culture. To break their influence, he called in German Protestant missionaries³⁸¹,

376 The king offers 10,000 men to transport the beams and pillars of the church in Zaza and another 8,000 men to transport the 151 beams of the frame of the church in Save.

377 Mbonimana, *l'instauration*, 243–253.

378 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated April 22, 1898 to Canon Winterer, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096098–096099.

379 The explorer Kandt was appointed Imperial Resident of Rwanda on 15 November 1907 (R. BINDSEIL, *Le Rwanda et l'Allemagne depuis le temps de Richard Kandt*, Berlin, 1988, 100). In the course of 1908, he set up the Residence in Kigali. On 14 September 1908, he wrote to the imperial governor in Dar es Salaam: "... when I founded the seat of the Residence, I gave it the name of the mountain in front of which it is situated. This mountain, however, is simply part of a second mountain, which is called Kigali, and which is well known throughout Rwanda because of the sacred wood there and the large ferry that crosses the Njavarongo River at its feet. This is why the name Njarugenge does not pass into common usage at all; on the contrary – and I could cite a hundred examples – all the natives, from the Sultan to the last peasant, call the station Kigali... and even we, the officials of the Residence, often catch ourselves using this name. I know from long experience that it is impossible to oppose a name when it has already taken root in everyone's mind. As this name also has the advantage of being shorter and more distinctive than Njarugenge, I humbly request permission to name the Residence 'Kigali', especially as the name of the Residence has never been mentioned in any official communiqué..." (Bindseil, Reinhart: *Le Rwanda et l'Allemagne depuis le temps de Richard Kandt*, Berlin: Reimer 1988, 108).

380 Louis, Roger William: *Ruanda – Urundi: 1884–1919*, Oxford: Greenwood 1963, 145–160.

381 Letter from Fr. Classe dated February 23, 1914 to Fr. Marchal, A.G. M.Afr., n° 111149–111152.

raising fears among the White Fathers that the native authority would one day convert to Protestantism³⁸². Seeing the change, Bishop Hirth, in Marienberg, appointed Father Classe as Vicar General in Rwanda in 1907 with the task of coordinating the relations of the White Fathers with the colonial and indigenous authorities³⁸³. This appointment provoked many reactions:

“As for the Vicar General, Fr. Classe, I no doubt obey him as I do our Vicar Apostolic, but to tell you frankly, I believe that I could never trust him and I am not the only one; moreover, because of his exploits in Mulera, he will always be a living danger to our missions here. I also believe that the best diplomacy and policy for a missionary is to make sure that you cannot be blamed for anything, and not the art of saying well, of biasing, of dissimulating and even of skillfully making other *confrères* suspicious in order to get out of trouble yourself”³⁸⁴.

“The trip to Rwanda taught me many things about and against Father Classe. He will have no authority over his *confrères*. There has been too much misery at the post of Mulera. As vicar general he will have little influence and if one day you wanted a vicar apostolic for Rwanda, he would not be the one to choose. If Bishop Hirth were to disappear, I really don't know who could replace him. There is only Father Leonard. On the other hand, if we were to appoint a vicar apostolic who would not continue Bishop Hirth's methods, it would be a disaster for the mission”³⁸⁵.

“Your Lordship asks in his last letter of the 8 August what could be the cause of the lack of understanding in Ruanda? I tried to tell the Visitor, but to no avail, that this does not seem right, even though Fr. I think there has been quite a bit of exaggeration, and some ill-founded criticism. And then, in my opinion, the heart got involved; there are inexplicable antipathies”³⁸⁶.

382 Rutayisire, *la Christianisation*, 50–55.

383 Fr. Classe had won the confidence of Bishop Livinhac, Superior General (he had been his secretary), of Fr. Voillard, first assistant (he had been his novice) and of Bishop Hirth, Vicar Apostolic (he was his spiritual son). On the other hand, several of his confreres challenged his authority until 1921. They reproached him for his past in Rwaza, his lack of frankness and his penchant for intrigue.

384 Letters from Fr. Zuembiehl dated June 6, 1907 and 15 December 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097409–097444.

385 Letter from Fr. Malet dated March 26, 1908 to a member of the General Council, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096550–096555..

386 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated September 25, 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095160–095161.

"In Ruanda, Fr. Classe and the confreres are working, I believe, to re-establish union among them, and there has been good progress already; this would soon be complete, if the confreres knew that Fr. Classe has the confidence of his Superiors. Father Classe is well aware that he has made mistakes; he has deluded himself into believing that he should follow the example of certain elders. But I believe that the Father is not obstinate in his illusions and will try to act according to your instructions"³⁸⁷.

Fr. Classe settled at the Kabgayi post, a place of passage where all the information from the country arrives³⁸⁸. He took advantage of this to defend the interests of the White Fathers by approaching the Residence:

"Recourse to the Government is illusory and dangerous, and this because of the policy followed. We must absolutely work to destroy the opinion of those in power that we are the men of the Bahutu, biased against the chiefs, and that we always take sides against them, despite the Government's policy to the contrary. The government reproaches us for this in every possible way, even threatening in official letters that if we do not change our policy, we will not be able to obtain new foundations. The Government therefore reproaches us at least for working to found an anti-government party; if this were true, we would have worked, against ourselves and against God whose envoys we are, to form an anti-Catholic party"³⁸⁹.

At Kandt's request, Father Classe founded a post in Kigali to counterbalance the growing influence of Islam:

"Mr Kandt, after his visit to the King, came to Kabgaye only. The Resident insisted a lot to the Bishop, to me, that we should establish ourselves immediately in Kigali. Five times he took up the question saying that a branch was impossible, insufficient. One of the reasons given was 'the need to combat Muslim propaganda'³⁹⁰.

387 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated October 20, 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095158–095159.

388 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated March 24, 1905 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., 095098–095100: "Marangara [Kabgayi], our new mission center, will be 3 days north of Isavi, 7 or 8 days from Kinyaga (South Kivu), 5 or 6 days from Bugoye (North Kivu), 4 days from Mulera and 4 days from Kissaka. The latter post is still 8 days from Ussuwi and 14 days from Marienberg in a direct line".

389 Letter from Fr. Classe dated March 17, 1913 to his confreres, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111218–111219.

390 Annual Report on the Missions of Rwanda of the 25 November 1912, A.G. M.Afr., N° 11110 (095319–095322).

"27 November 1913 – On the subject of Muslims, Mr Kandt tells us that all those in Kigali are foreigners, and that the Banyarwanda are ashamed to admit that they have been circumcised in Bukoba or elsewhere, and that they hide themselves. He says that Musinga forbids Bahutu who become Muslims to live among other Bahutu; they should go and live with the traders. Mr Kant says that this measure could never have come from the Resident, and that this is why good politics demands that Musinga be allowed freedom of action. Moreover, the mwalimu [teacher] of the Fort was reportedly ordered in writing to refrain from propaganda; children can only be circumcised with the consent of their parents, which the parents will obviously refuse"³⁹¹.

Bishop Hirth will establish another post in Bushiru to bring its population under German rule without bloodshed:

"The Government is very grateful to the Catholic Mission for the great services rendered by the foundation of the Stations of Ruasa in particular, and of Nyundo, Rulindo, not to mention all the others in Rwanda. These Missions have done much for the pacification of the country and to help the Government in the good administration. The influence that the missionaries have been able to take over the indigenous people, who are almost independent of any authority, has fortunately saved the Government the trouble of carrying out military expeditions in these regions, which usually only lead to useless massacres. The Bushiru, which has a magnificent population of about 60–70,000 inhabitants, is still unsubdued; the King cannot exercise his authority there through the Batutsi; the Government would like to avoid bringing war there; but the Catholic Mission has maintained a post of catechists there for a year. In the name of the Government, I ask the Catholic Mission to place missionaries in Bushiru, from now on, in a fixed post; these would surely win the confidence of this energetic population, and thus effectively advance the cause of civilisation"³⁹².

Bishop Hirth also has good relations with the Court. The Court appreciated the White Fathers who always defended its interests in the North. It even hired Father Loupias as its representative to preside over a royal tribunal (the Rukara case in 1910)³⁹³. During this period, the first chiefs started to frequent the posts of Kabgayi and Rwaza.

391 Journal de Sainte-Famille (Kigali): 1912–1929, 6.

392 Letter from Fr. Classe dated November 1st, 1913 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111144–111146.

393 Mbonimana, *l'instauration*, 246–253.

The economic dimension

The economic dimension of the mission is little known, which means that its importance is underestimated. For the moment, historical sources are lacking; the accounts of the White Fathers' posts and those of their procurators (Marseille, Zanzibar and Mwanza) have not yet been found.

We know that the White Fathers introduced a new economic order different from the traditional economy based on family farming, pastoral serfdom (*ubuhake*) and forced labour [*corvée*] demanded by the authority in the form of taxes. Thanks to their vast estates, they enjoy economic autonomy; their first six posts together own 879 hectares. In the local markets, they obtain food and building materials by paying for them with beads, pins, salt, etc. They give their school children an attendance bonus:³⁹⁴ They hire workers to build their posts, tend their herds, cultivate their land and supervise their catechumens. They recruit their workers directly by offering them a salary, instead of going through the local chiefs. The local chiefs see this as an infringement of their authority and economic interests; they miss out on considerable profits. In addition, they will be forced to work at the post as ordinary workers in order to have the same benefits as their subjects:³⁹⁵ As a result, between the local chiefs and the White Fathers, a rivalry arose, whose stake was the control of the local population³⁹⁶. The local population prefers to work for a salary instead of providing free labour. Sometimes they used the weapon of the strike to obtain a better salary from the White Fathers³⁹⁷.

394 Account of Bishop Hirth's trip at the end of December 1900 to his brother, Abbé Ernest, A.G. M.Afr., O60, N° 095308.

395 Heremans, Ntezimana, *Journal de la Mission de Save*, 75: "It was no small joy for the Bahutu to see their leaders, always so proud enemies of pain and constraint, carrying bricks from morning to night like someone who works to get cloth".

396 Letter from Fr. Barthélemy dated May 22, 1900, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097053: "... we do not treat the Bahutu like the Batusi; we pay those who come to work; we look after the sick; we receive everyone with affability. This does not please the Batusi at all; they would have liked us to have everything done by them, to say to them: I need a hut, have it built; I would like a potato field, have it cultivated; they would then have had the work done by the Bahutu, pocketed the reward, and the poor Bahutu would have been satisfied, not with a thank you, but with insults and blows. We are therefore a straw in the eye of the Batusi".

397 Heremans, Ntezimana, *Journal de la Mission de Save*, 134.

Under the economic action of the White Fathers, the population around their posts will experience a certain prosperity, allowing them to improve their social status:

“When we arrived, we were not surprised to see the Bahutu keep a low profile towards us; they regarded us as Batousi of a new kind who had come here to live at their expense. The misunderstanding ceased as soon as they saw us receive everyone with the same kindness; **their eyes especially could not tire of admiring the blue, white and red beads that we gave them in exchange for their products**; they called us their fathers, their saviours, and thought they had been transported to a land of fairies and metamorphosed into Batousi, which would be the supreme happiness for them (...) Not even the blacksmiths, potters and cabinet makers came to offer us their art objects, and if they had known about advertising, there is no doubt that they would have put on their prospectus: ‘Suppliers of the missionaries’ or rather of the ‘lords’ as we are called here. Many of the Batousi chiefs in the vicinity did not want to be late and brought us many gifts, but we are less friendly to them”³⁹⁸.

They dresses in cotton, a privilege previously reserved for the rich:³⁹⁹ An inhabitant no longer has to follow the system of pastoral servitude to have a cow, a symbol of wealth and power. He can buy one for himself:⁴⁰⁰ Thus the cow becomes an object of trade instead of a symbol of the owner’s attachment to his king.

The White Fathers criticized the lack of private property and the system of pastoral serfdom as obstacles to development⁴⁰¹ and also to the evangelization of the country:

“According to the law we are free and not bound by any treaty. This right we had officially recognized by the Government, because of the trial of R.R. Frs. Benedictines. This right is theoretical, we wanted to save the principle. In practice, where we want to go, we need a piece of land, however small. The natives do not have the right of ownership; it belongs only to the King. An official catechist

398 Undated letter (late 1900?) from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 145, January – February 1901, 8–16.

399 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523: “Thus our Banyarwanda note that since our arrival, in almost the entire country, the Adam costume of children and young people is far from being in honour as it was in the past”.

400 Nahimana, Ferdinand: *Le Blanc est arrivé. Le Roi est parti. Une facette de l’histoire du Rwanda contemporain: 1894–1931*, Kigali: Printer Set 1987, 95.

401 Rutayisire, *la Christianisation*, 85.

cannot therefore obtain anything from a chief without the King. And for us to obtain the smallest piece of land, we need the consent of the King and that of the Residence. This is the noose that can be tightened at will, according to the pressures coming from above"⁴⁰².

They were also sources of great injustice to their Christians. In 1912, Bishop Hirth questioned the prejudices of his confreres towards pastoral servitude:⁴⁰³ He wondered why a good Christian could not follow this custom in order to gain the trust of his boss with a view to his conversion. To pay their workers, the White Fathers introduced their own currency, the *pesas*:⁴⁰⁴ These were small metal plates with no official value that their workers could exchange at the end of the month for beads, cotton or other products. They also used small pieces of paper (*byete*):⁴⁰⁵ Each piece (*kete*) had the value of a day's work.

At that time, the traditional economic system and the White Fathers' economic system were still intertwined. The *Banyarwanda* would, according to their customs, put themselves at the service of the White Fathers, either out of friendship or out of interest:⁴⁰⁶ As a result, they will detach themselves from their chiefs in order to escape the *corvée* and to find protection from the White Fathers:

"The Banyarwanda of course flock to the missionaries, especially those who have nothing to lose and those who want to escape their obligations to their lords. If the mission has large areas of land, it risks entering into a kind of rivalry with the chief, seeing some people come to settle on his domain to escape forced labour

402 Letter from Fr. Classe dated February 23, 1914 to Fr. Marchal, A.G. M.Afr., n° 111149–111152.

403 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated January 1st, 1912 to his missionaries, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111117–111123: "Let our well-trained and educated Christians go, maintained and helped by the missionaries, to put themselves at the service of the chiefs (*kuhakwa*); if they know how to be as helpful and deferential as their pagan friends, their know-how and knowledge of reading and writing in Kiswahili will quickly give them the ear and favour of the chiefs".

404 Heremans, Ntezimana, *Journal*, 131.

405 Muvara, F.: *Monographie historique de la Mission de Save (1900–1950)*, Butare: Mémoire de licence: 1981, 36.

406 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523: "...it is a sought-after honour to be the *mugaragwe* [servant] of the Whites (...). It is certain that Blacks answer the questions put to them without worrying about the truth, they consider their own interest and even more what will be most agreeable to the person they are talking to when the latter is superior to them. An inferior will never contradict his boss, never offend him; Blacks are unusually careful in this respect".

and making the big men jealous. No matter how quickly we build up large communities, many of their members are only interested in the external benefits and join us thinking that it is good to live under the shelter of the Church. The various complications and uncertainties involved in such land ownership and the positions of the chiefs have led us to take for our missions only the land necessary to cover the needs of the missionaries (...). Here in Rwanda, it is more a question of preventing rather than promoting the rapid creation of communities, but also of not thwarting in any way the divine will which invites the little ones and the poor, the sick and the homeless"⁴⁰⁷.

The White Fathers, for their part, recovered the system of pastoral servitude. By post, they will build up herds of cows.⁴⁰⁸ They will distribute these cows to their trusted men (auxiliaries), just like the local chiefs.⁴⁰⁹ As for the construction of their churches, they will appeal to the king who will give them workers who will work for them in the form of *corvées*, a system disavowed by their major superiors. But could they have acted otherwise with their limited financial means?

From 1907 onwards, the White Fathers noted that the colonial economy was supplanting the traditional economy. They looked to the future with anxiety, seeing that the population was discontented. The population had to supply the caravans by force, pay higher and higher taxes and perform more and more

407 Johanssen, Ernst: „Was ist gerade jetzt für Ruanda nötig“, *Nachrichten aus der ostafrikanischen Mission*, N° 23, 1909, 142.

408 In 1906, Father Brard was the owner of a herd of 10 cows, 10 calves and 3 heifers (Letter from Father Malet dated November 15, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096518–096524). The herd of the imperial resident Kandt had 58 cows in 1908 (Journal de Sainte-Famille à Kigali: 1912–1929, 5). Fr. Classe, in 1904, built up a herd of cows for his Rwaza station from a raid on the population (Letter from Brother Herménégilde dated August 25, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 070825, see document N° 1 in the appendix: “The mission was created on unjust revenues”).

409 Annual report of Zaza: 1st July 1904 – 1st July 1905, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, N° 125, March 1906, 170–174: **“One of our first baptized wanted to frequent his hill chief in the hope of obtaining a cow from him, which he did indeed obtain. But as this chief inspired in him ideas opposed to the Christian spirit, the Father Superior, to punish him for these associations and also for some minor domestic quarrels, took away another cow which he had from the mission. This Christian immediately cooled down and abstained from the sacraments for a long time.** Finally, driven by remorse, he came to us and said: “Father, I want the sacraments. Yes,” said the Father, “but on condition that you do what you are told. – I have done it,” he replied. – Well, you shall have the sacraments, but as a punishment, the mission cow will not be returned to you. – Let it be,” he replied, “for I want only God”.

chores. As a result of the economic boom, the prices of food and building materials rose, as did the wages of the workers. This increase in prices put a strain on the budget of the White Fathers, who were unable to employ their Christians on a permanent basis. Many of their workers will move to the new business centers, where they will find safe and better paid work:

"Moreover, the thirst for gold is also felt here, especially in the last year. We have a large business center, Kissenyi, two hours away. Only last year this beautiful beach, called Kissenyi, did not have ten huts, today there are more than 800 souls, all smugglers (between Congo and German colony). As their trade in rubber and ivory is very lucrative, they can afford an infinite number of helpers, I would say; this is why a large proportion of the Bagoyé are at their service:"⁴¹⁰

They fear that people are more interested in money than in religion.

"The fever of gain is somewhat winning over all our brave Banyarwanda who have remained so far behind. The country is a trail of merchants, Indians, Arabs, Swahili, Baganda and others. And the merchant civilisation is entering fast! Good and bad at the same time, but inevitable. So far, our Christians have remained good; in spite of a few units who have lost their heads at the sight of rupees, unknown two years ago. We cannot and must not prevent them from seeking, as they do, greater and easier gains, which they soon lose, because their needs become greater and all prices triple. May we at least keep them good"⁴¹¹.

They were especially worried about the presence of Asian traders who were spreading Islam among the population⁴¹². Finally, they wonder about the future of their jobs as the Germans plan to "export part of the population" as cheap labour:

"In this last quarter the important event was the visit of H.E. Dr. Schnee, Governor of D.O.A., who had just made through Ruanda, north-east of Urundi. The **purpose of the trip was to study the possibility of the rapid establishment of a railway from Tabora to the mouth of the Ruvuvu in Kagera, i.e. three days south-east of Nsasa.** In three

410 Letter from Fr. Barthélemy dated October 15, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097536.

411 Letter from Fr. Classe dated January 30, 1910 to Bishop Livinhac, N° 11110 (095218–095220).

412 Annual report on the Rwanda missions of 25 November 1912, N° 11110 (095319–095322): "The Indians are rushing more and more into Rwanda, but their great objective is the Belgian Congo to be drained. They bring us the forced recruitment of innumerable porters for Bukoba, the Mwaromarket (south of Mibirisi, on the border with Congo) and Kameronsi (200 km. northwest of Kivu). The King and some chiefs (not all of them) think it is good enough: they get the rupees! These Indians are also the cause of numerous new chores for the woods, their construction... Above all the great evil is that they work everywhere for Islam".

years, we were told, the track will be fully established. These gentlemen, however, did not fail to say that Rwanda had no export products, **but that it had ‘workers’**”⁴¹³.

The socio-cultural dimension

Today, the mission, in its socio-cultural dimension, is perceived as a place of encounter between cultures at the service of inter-religious dialogue. In Rwanda, during the German colonial period, can we speak of a real encounter between the White Fathers and the Rwandans?

From 1900 to 1916, the White Fathers laid the foundations of the Catholic Church. They founded 11 posts with branches⁴¹⁴, thus occupying the whole territory of the country. In 1914, these 11 posts had 42 missionaries, 16 nuns, 119 catechists, 15,225 neophytes and 3,958 catechumens. In 44 schools, 1,703 boys and 1,206 girls were taught to read, write and calculate⁴¹⁵. In the same year, more than 117,500 sick people were treated. The first Christians represent barely 1% of the population out of approximately 2 million inhabitants.

To achieve this first modest result, the White Fathers followed a strategy capable of adapting to change. Their main weapons were Western technology, politics, knowledge of the local language (*Kinyarwanda*), conviction of the rightness of their mission, the valorisation of work⁴¹⁶ and the proselytising of their first neophytes. As for the methods to be followed, they will not always be of the same opinion.

Once settled in Rwanda, the White Fathers deepened their knowledge of the country:

“It is of the utmost importance for missionaries, on arriving in a new country, to study its manners and customs, its government, its population with its vices and qualities. Blacks, especially mature men, are very attached to their traditions

413 Letter from Fr. Classe dated March 23, 1913 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111133–111135.

414 Minnaert, Stefaan: *Save – 1900: Fondation de la première communauté chrétienne au Rwanda*, Kigali, 2000, 93.

415 Statistics from 30 June 1913 to 30 June 1914, in *Annual Reports*, N° 11, 1915–1916, 63*.

416 Letter from Fr. Léonard’s dated July 11, 1909 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095205–095207: “Everywhere the confreres have the best will in the world, everywhere there is enormous work. In none of the missions entrusted to our Society, not even in any of the educational houses in Europe, do the confreres work as hard as here. I think I can also say that nowhere is it more important than here to follow the directions of the Superiors. It is, as one confrere said, a high-pressure machine which gives all the work it is capable of”.

and can paralyse everything from the start if they are offended; a small thing often for us, an imprudent word, an act which unknowingly tends to depreciate the customs still too early, embitters them and drives them away from us; just as a small thing is sometimes enough to win them over"⁴¹⁷.

They discover the complexity of society in terms of its organisation and composition. They observe differences between the east and west and between the south and north of the country⁴¹⁸. The *Bagoyi*, for example, live in villages, while elsewhere people live separately in the middle of their banana plantations:

"In Bougoye, the huts, instead of being scattered as in Rouanda, are grouped in small villages, some of which contain up to twenty huts. These agglomerations make the work of the missionaries and catechists much easier"⁴¹⁹.

They also found that the inhabitants identified themselves first with their clans, then with their regions and lastly as *Hutu*, *Tutsi* or *Twa*. All speak the same language, follow the same "superstitions"⁴²⁰ and recognize the king as the supreme judge. His legitimacy is contested in the north, but in the south, except in Gisaka and Kinyaga, he exercises absolute power.⁴²¹ The White Fathers see that there are poor and rich among the *Bahutu*⁴²² and the *Batutsi*. In their writings they confuse the mass of the population with the political elite. They refer to the mass (composed of poor *Tutsis* and *Hutus*) as "the Bahutus" and to the political and economic elite (composed of rich *Tutsis* and *Hutus*) as "the Batutsis."⁴²³

Following the recommendations of their founder, the White Fathers studied the religion, history and customs of the country. In 1902, Fr. Brard was content to

417 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

418 C. Lecoindre: *Raisons qui ont nui beaucoup au développement de la mission au Ruanda*, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459 (see document N° 3 in annex).

419 Letter from Fr. Classe, dated May 1901, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 155, September-October 1902, 377-394.

420 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

421 *Ibid.*

422 For example, in 1910, Rukara, a *Hutu* chief, had more than 1,600 cows (Report by Fr. Soubielle on the death of Fr. Loupias (1910), A.G. M.Afr., N° 098422-098430).

423 The number of this elite, according to Father Brard, is limited to 2% of the population (Letter from Father Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 145, January-February 1901, 8-16), to 3.2% according to the Germans (Bindseil, *Le Rwanda*, 121-126).

write: "All the Blacks are more or less at the same level of beliefs and history; the substance is always the same, only the details differ."⁴²⁴ In his analyses, he is in line with the thinking of Lavigerie and that of his vicar apostolic, Bishop Hirth. On the other hand, Fr. Loupias, in 1908, made a remarkable comparison between the Bible and Rwandan mythology: "One will be surprised to find here the truths that the Christian faith teaches us about creation, the state of innocence, the fall of man, and also about the Redeemer... For us missionaries, knowledge of popular traditions is not a negligible thing, especially when, as here, there are only a few points to be corrected and completed. It is the open door to the evangelization of the country"⁴²⁵.

Without delay, the first White Fathers learn the language of the country to better communicate with the population.⁴²⁶ They compiled a dictionary of two thousand words for internal use. In 1902, they published the first book in *Kinyarwanda*⁴²⁷. The following year, they discussed the spelling of this language. Finally, they decided to follow the one adopted for *Kiganda*. The first catechism was printed in 1907. A translation of the *Katholische Schulbibel* (Catholic School Bible) was printed in 1911. Balthazar Kafuku, a Rwandan seminarian, published his first letter in German in the missionary magazine *Afrika-Bote*⁴²⁸! And in 1912, Fr. Dufays published his *German-Kinyarwanda* dictionary.

When they arrived, the White Fathers thought that Rwanda was a small paradise that had been subjugated by the Germans without any bloodshed.⁴²⁹ The reality was different. They discovered violence in its economic and cultural forms. The economic violence hit the mass of the population in a frightening way. For a number of reasons, agrarian productivity is not able to feed the population. The social fabric deteriorates and the tension between the different social classes increases. The slave trade took advantage of this until 1906 to do business.⁴³⁰ It is

424 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

425 P. Loupias: 'Tradition et légende des Batutsi sur la création du monde et leur établissement au Ruanda', in *Anthropos*, Tome III, 1908, 1–13.

426 Van der Meersch, J.: *Le catéchuménat au Rwanda de 1900 à nos jours*, Kigali 1993, 24–62.

427 *Ibid.*, 25.

428 Kafuku, B.: Brief eines schwarzen Seminaristen – Letter from a Black Seminarist (14 November 1910), in *Afrika-Bote*, 1910–1911, 121–123.

429 Bishop Hirth: *Récits de voyage (1899–1908)*, A.G. M.Afr., 18 January 1900, N° O60.

430 Mujawimana, E.: *Le commerce des esclaves au Rwanda*, Ruhengeri: Mémoire de licence 1982, 266.

not surprising that the mass of the population dreamt of change when the White Fathers arrived. They felt that they were welcomed as liberators and saviours.⁴³¹

Cultural violence is largely linked to the way in which power is exercised. In Rwanda, its use has been amplified by the fact that the individual exists only in relation to the group:

“Everything here seems to have to be done ‘en corps’. The esprit de corps dominates everywhere, and manifests itself in all circumstances. Whether it is a question of working, fighting, drinking pombé, etc., it is always by village, by clan that the Bagoyé walk. The quarrel of one is that of the others, and more than once we have experienced that one should not reprimand a clumsy person too much, or else all the people of the same hill will sulk with him for two or three days! To be taught, they seem to want to follow the same method: they always come together, hill by hill, village by village. The method is good, it excites emulation and encourages proselytism”⁴³².

431 Bishop Hirth: Travelogues (1899–1908). *Journal de Voyage au Rwanda*: November 1899 – February 1900, A.G. M.Afr., No. O60, 2 February 1900: “You know our future parishioners a little now. The Batusi are a bit proud, but we will try to get them started anyway. We will have mostly Bahutu, they have suffered for so long that they will welcome us as liberators. God has his moments and grace has its choices”. Undated letter (end of 1900?) from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 145, January – February 1901, 8–16.

432 Letter from Fr. Classe, dated May 1901, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 155, September–October 1902, 377–394.

The indigenous authority,⁴³³ the colonial authority,⁴³⁴ the mass of the population,⁴³⁵ as well as the White Fathers, were all violent. The use of violence by the

433 The indigenous authority easily uses violence to impose its will in a way that borders on cruelty. Its victims are members of the political elite as well as the mass of the population. For example, in 1912, during the Ndungutserevolt, the repression of the northern population by the king's troops. Letter from Fr. Delmas dated April 7, 1912 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098182–098183: "To complete the stories, a new king has just appeared to the east of us in Buberuka. He claims to be the son of Mibambge, successor of Lwabugiri, who was massacred by Musinga's supporters. The whole of the northern part of Rwanda declared itself in favour of the new king, who called himself Ndungutse, i.e. the whole region more or less in revolt. On the advice of the Residence, we forbade our people from the outset to go to the new king, but the revolt reached such a point that the Government had to intervene. Since 11 April, the north-eastern part of the country, up to the mission, has been in a state of war. The company with its 200 soldiers and 4 or 5,000 warriors from Musinga are ravaging everything, killing, looting and burning. Ndungutse, in order to win the good graces of the Residency, delivered Lukara, the murderer of Fr. Loupias, to the Government. But it was too late. Lukara arrived in Kigali on 11 April, just the day war was declared. There was no opposition from him. His supporters only have to flee or be killed. It is not yet known whether Ndungutse was killed. He had tried three times to have relations with the mission, but in vain".

434 The use of violence by the Germans is a fact whose extent remains underestimated. With the help of askaris (African soldiers), they subjugated the rebellious provinces with rifles and machine guns: men, women and children were killed or wounded, houses were burnt, banana plantations were razed and livestock confiscated. For years, the Bagoye will be terrorised by the members of the delimitation commissions (Belgian, British and German); they will regularly take refuge in the forests and caves around the volcanoes.

435 The mass of the population is familiar with violence. For them, making war is an interesting pastime; their heroes are the warriors whose bravery and courage they sing at festivals. A man rarely separates himself from his weapons; his spear is even the symbol of his virility (C. LECOINDRE, *op.cit.*, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459). Theft is a widespread evil. In the north, settling of scores between families is the order of the day (Letter from Fr. Classe dated May (?) 1901 in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 155, September–October 1902, 377–394). The use of poison to liquidate an adversary is widespread throughout the country. It is not uncommon for children to receive excessive punishment (Fr. CLASSE: *Mœurs et Coutumes des Bagoyé* (1905), A.G. M.Afr., N° O89/1: 'For children, the punishment is also terrible. When a small child shows a talent for theft that is too precocious, the mother ties old pieces of matting around his hands. Without hesitation, she sets fire to them and holds the child until the consumed flesh leaves only a shapeless stump. More often the child is tied to a tree and the father, armed with a stick, gives it a long piece of morality in action).

White Fathers is a little known phenomenon in the missionary literature.⁴³⁶ The major superiors affirm that the foundation of the first posts was accompanied by acts of violence.⁴³⁷ Fr. Lecoindre admits that his confreres subjugated the North with weapons.⁴³⁸ It was in 1904 that Father Classe organised an unprecedented military campaign to bring order between the *Balera* clans.⁴³⁹

“I also consider the appointment of Father Classe as Vicar General to be a fault, for which I am responsible. I have had to note that this Father does not have the confidence of his confreres at all; that he has committed many faults in the foundation of Mulera (the facts recounted by Brother Herménégilde are exact) and that he has not been able to get along with almost any of his confreres”⁴⁴⁰.

The post of Nyundo even sends him a reinforcement of more than 200 warriors under the leadership of Frs. Bartéhelemy and Loupias⁴⁴¹. The fighting, of unprecedented violence, lasted three days! To this day we know neither the number of victims nor the quantity of stolen cattle. As a result, the region experienced a succession of unprecedented revenges in which the Germans also participated. In 1909, the Christians of Rwaza executed a sorcerer with the complicity of Fr. Loupias.⁴⁴² Loupias was in turn killed in April 1910 by the men of Rukara, a rebel chief who became a national hero; Father Loupias had threatened

436 Note from Fr. Léonard dated December 22, 1909 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096617. Letter from Fr. Léonard dated June 24 1910 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096663. Letter from Fr. Léonard dated July 5, 1910 concerning Fr. Hurel's directory, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096623.

437 Fr. Malet's visiting card for Marangara (Kabgayi), made on 19 December 1907, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097080–097081.

438 C. Lecoindre, *op.cit.* A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459: “(1905) The bishop comes to make his regular visit... The southern posts (Issavi, Nsasa) talk of rapprochement with the king. The northern posts are not too keen on this. They fear that the authority of the Batutsi's will extend around them, to the detriment of the civil authority that the missionaries had acquired through their feats of arms... “.

439 Letter from Brother Herménégilde dated August 25, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 070825.

440 Letter from Fr. Malet dated August 21, 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096584–096586.

441 Rushatishi, J. B.: *Monographie historique de la Mission de Rwaza (1903–1956)*, Mémoire de licence, Ruhengeri 1985, 83–85.

442 Letter from Fr. Durand dated December 22, 1909 to Fr. Léonard, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096616–096617.

to kill this chief.⁴⁴³ On the occasion of Fr. Loupias' death in April 1910, Fr. Classe wrote: "Poor Ruanda, this is the time of suffering. May our Lord be pleased with this blood and forgive us our faults of the past, which we regret so much."⁴⁴⁴

That same year, Fr. Pagès shot one person with his rifle and wounded another by clumsiness:

"24 May [1910]. I had written the preceding lines when a letter from Nyundo tells us that Fr. Pagès, on his way back from a branch, was attacked by natives. What exactly happened is difficult to ascertain. The Father is fearful – on the way a porter said he saw an arrow shot from an armed group of natives. This was enough for the Father to fire two rifle shots, not into the air, but at the troop from which the arrow came. One native was killed, one wounded and the rest fled. A few days later, the Fathers of the station heard the rumour, spread throughout the country, that the dead man would be avenged on the Christians or Europeans on the 1st occasion."⁴⁴⁵

It is not surprising that at that time the White Fathers were afraid of being expelled by the Germans.⁴⁴⁶ In the south of the country, acts of violence were rather limited because of the proximity of the Court. They were mainly committed by the *Baganda* auxiliaries of Fr. Brard. Their example was followed, from 1903, by the Rwandan Christians. The major superiors, aware of the seriousness of the situation, intervened on several occasions but with little result:

"If it is important to recall this principle of authority, it is no less important to recall the spirit in which missionaries must conduct themselves in their relations with the natives. Without going into the details of the regrettable events which have occurred, we place before the eyes of the missionaries some recommendations which the S.C. *de Propagande Fide* makes much of, warning them to take them seriously and to reform as completely as possible their way of seeing and doing things in this regard. *Nimiam severitatem et austeritatem erga subditos fideles, etiam scandalososos, incorrigibiles et protervos devitent, nec unquam jurisdictionem quam non habent, sibi arrogare praesumant, eos poena publice plectendo; sed vestigia Christi praeceptoris nostri, et omnium virorum apostolicorum sectantes, se mansuetos et benignos exhibeant ad omnes. Nihil dicant, nihil faciant ex iracundia, indignatione, odio, vindicta, nec animo dominandi, vel iis timorem*

443 Léonard wrote about this incident in 1910: "With this report [of Fr. Pagès], a lawyer would take care of acquitting poor Lukara, by proving that he sincerely believed he was in self-defence" (Note by Fr. Léonard dated June 24, 1910, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098431).

444 Letter from Fr. Class dated May 2, 1910 to Fr. Léonard, sent to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 096621.

445 Letter from Bishop Sweens dated May 16, 1910 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095245.

446 Letter from Fr. Froberger dated May 15, 1910 to a member of the General Council, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098443–098444.

sui incutiendi; Ecclesiae et sacrorum canonum disciplinam, non proprium sensum et voluntatem séquantur. A subditis magis venerari et diligi studeant quam timeri; veneratio enim et dilectio fiduciam pariunt, timor vero et tremor, odium et aversionem conferunt. (No. 16) – They should avoid being too severe and austere towards the faithful to whom they are assigned, even those who give scandal, who are incorrigible and shameless, and they should never presume to arrogate to themselves a jurisdiction which they do not have, by punishing them publicly with a penalty; but, following in the footsteps of Christ our teacher and of all the apostolic men, they should show themselves kind and friendly towards all. Let them not say or do anything with irascibility, indignation, hatred or revenge, nor with the intention of acting as a master or inflicting fear on them; they must follow the discipline of the Church and the holy canons, not their own feelings and will. Let them strive more to be respected and loved by their subjects than to be feared; for respect and love give life to trust, fear and terror lead to hatred and aversion⁴⁴⁷.

The early history of the Catholic Church in Rwanda was marked by Fr. Brard.⁴⁴⁸ He applied Lavigerie's instructions in his own way; the White Fathers had not yet found "the true way of evangelization."⁴⁴⁹ He invented a method of evangelization known as "St Peter's method". Like the latter, he liked large gatherings, not very discreet, to raise awareness:

447 Letter from Bishop Livinhac dated April 1st, 1921 to the Missionaries of Kivu, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111373: Translated from the Latin by Father P. Horsten (M.Afr.).

448 Fr. Brard was an experienced missionary who participated in the evangelisation of the kingdoms around Lake Victoria. From 1900 to 1905, he was superior of the first White Fathers' station in Rwanda (Save) and, from 1904 to 1905, Bishop Hirth's representative. He trained several young missionaries, which contributed to his influence. It was not by chance that he was elected to participate in the General Chapter of 1906. He has the reputation of being pious, simple, clear-sighted, zealous, and good, but authoritarian and angry. He suffered from insomnia which he cured with banana beer (Letter from Bishop Hirth dated September 12, 1905 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., 095103–095104). Very comfortable with his superiors, he told them what he thought. His greatest mistake was to criticise Bishop Hirth, a criticism which was heard at the 1906 General Chapter (A. Brard: Notes proposed to Bishop Livinhac on the occasion of the 1906 General Chapter, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095349). He was not at all appreciated by those in authority. Hirth who distrusted him because of his violent behaviour. Fr. Brard forgot himself several times during the foundation of the stations in Ukerewe and Usui. In Save, Bishop Hirth used his confreres to watch him.

449 Hurel, E. : Histoire du "Sacré-Coeur d'Issavi" (Ruanda), Issavi, 18 June 1909, A.G.M.Afr., N° 112029–112042, 28 "At that time all our Missions were young, or still groping for the right path, and it goes without saying that they were trying things out on the side. As we shall see, H.G. Bishop Hirth, the Vicar Apostolic, will delay in imposing on the inexperience of the missionaries his directions, whose marvelous accuracy, not to say genius, everyone admires today, due to his long experience of the Missions".

“On Sundays we are always crowded, we take turns teaching catechism throughout the day. **Our aim is above all to teach them to sanctify Sunday, to get to know the natives and to inculcate in them at least the main truths**”⁴⁵⁰.

Fr. Brard generously distributed small gifts to the youth⁴⁵¹ with the idea of recruiting the first catechumens from among them.⁴⁵² He opened the door of his post to everyone, without exception. According to the instructions received from his vicar apostolic, he should have dealt first with the *Bahutu*:

“My lord, remembering what he had to suffer personally from the neighbourhood of Mukotagny, king of Kiziba, what Kasusulo had made me suffer in Usui and what we had to suffer everywhere from the neighbourhood of these omnipotent characters, preferred to found the station in the middle of the country of the ‘Bahutu’, the ‘bakozi’ people, abandoning for later the nobility of the ‘Watutsi’, who courted the king: He said: ‘Didn’t the Apostles begin with the poor, let us imitate them.’”⁴⁵³

Fr. Brard’s first catechumens are two poor *Tutsis*:

“In order to prepare it as well as possible, we have opened our door wide to those who want to come to us, without exception. **The first catechumens were two poor Batousi, very thin and half naked, who certainly did not belong to the high aristocracy. They were eagerly being educated and no longer thought of returning to the capital. One of them is very intelligent and will be able to help us convert his brothers. Another of our most fervent catechumens is still a young nobleman of eighteen; his father, a former provincial chief, is dead and, his mother having remarried, this young man is left with his little brother and a slave, without fortune and without parents; another poor man of the good Lord**”⁴⁵⁴.

It is not surprising that the composition of the first Christian community in Sava is very similar to that of the Bwanamukali province.⁴⁵⁵ Obviously, the political and economic elite close to the king and attached to traditions is not present. Brard’s relations with the court were friendly at the beginning.⁴⁵⁶ The king secretly warned him that certain rebel leaders wanted to attack his post. In addition, he sent him young men to be educated.⁴⁵⁷

450 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

451 *Anonymous*: *Au cœur du Rwanda chrétien (1900–1946), Relations entre missionnaires (Pères Blancs) et clergé indigène du Ruanda*, A.G. M.Afr., N° O 343/3.

452 It seems that Fr. Brard wanted to train one Christian per family.

453 Letter from Father Brard dated February 15, 1900 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

454 Undated letter (late 1900?) from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N°. 145, January–February 1901, 8–16.

455 Heremans, Ntezimana, *Journal*, 90.

456 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 1st, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 148, July – August 1901, 121–125: “This prince is well disposed towards us”.

457 *Ibid.*

At Fr. Brard's request, the king orders two members of the court to settle near Save⁴⁵⁸ to show the population that he and Fr. Brard are friends. Their relationship was tested by the violent behaviour of the *Baganda* auxiliaries. Fr. Brard had hired them to start the conversion of his post; at the beginning there were even about forty of them. They propagated a politicised religion, imported from Buganda, in the hills. They told the 'Bahutu' that the missionaries would free them from the 'yoke of the Batutsi'.⁴⁵⁹ Have they tried to form a political party like in Buganda?⁴⁶⁰ Many of them terrorized the population, scandalized the chiefs and showed little respect for Rwandan beliefs. In the end, they discredited the White Fathers in the eyes of the local authority.⁴⁶¹ Bishop Hirth, in 1903, sent them all away:

"Within three months, about 23 of the 30 foreign auxiliaries who have been working for three years to make the mission odious to all the chiefs and old men must be dismissed. Several of these auxiliaries have offences to their credit which expose them to the law, and it would be a misfortune for the mission to see soldiers from the Fort come and seize

458 Undated letter (end of 1900?) from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 145, January – February 1901, 8–16: "At our request, Youhi sent two of his main chiefs to reside with us, to make it clear to all the Batousi that we were friends of the king, and that we had no desire to revolt and interfere in the affairs of the country".

459 C. Lecoindre, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459.

460 Minnaert, *Save*, 177. "In 1902, the military of Ujiji pointed out to the White Fathers that 'the force of expansion of Islam lies in the ability with which its proselytes are recruited. Provided that the postulant pronounces – with conviction or not, it does not matter – the Islamic formula of faith: 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger', he is part of the Muslim community and is considered a brother by all his co-religionists. Among Catholics, on the other hand, the catechumen is subject to a probationary period of four years, and is only admitted to baptism after having given sufficient guarantees of morality and having satisfactorily passed various catechism examinations. **The Muslims aim at numbers, the Catholics at quality, and 'it is in this, we are told, that you are wrong'.** Even if you had a few apostates among your number, would the harm be so great? Very great! As we seek above all the salvation of souls, we must necessarily demand what is the indispensable condition: the knowledge of certain truths and the observance of a moral law, from which we can exempt no one; finally, **as salvation is an individual and not a collective matter, we cannot proceed by simple enrolment, in the manner of the Moslems or certain Protestant missionaries. At most we shall succeed in creating a political party, but not a religion, and then we shall be poorly rewarded for the sacrifices we have imposed on ourselves, moreover, for an entirely different purpose**" (*Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 155, September – October 1902, 403).

461 C. Lecoindre, *op. cit.* A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459.

these so-called catechists. The mission has every advantage in replacing these auxiliaries, who were hired for only one year, with its first neophytes and its best catechumens”⁴⁶². In addition, the salaries of these catechists are too much of a burden on the vicariate’s budget:

“All these catechists are, it is true, at our expense, and they will entail great expenses for the Vicariate; but I hope that the good Master will know how to proportion the resources to the number of workers and catechumens”⁴⁶³.

In that same year of 1903, Fr. Brard was told by the king that he could only teach the mass of the population.⁴⁶⁴ He saw several obstacles to the evangelization of the country.⁴⁶⁵ The biggest, according to him, is the hold of the traditional power over the population, which wants to please the authorities. As a result of the system of chores, the population lacks the time to be educated. Often, they do not have the strength to study because they are hungry. The last obstacle, according to Fr. Brard, is the traditional Rwandan marriage: “The Banyarwanda marry very young, around 14 or 15 years old, and these marriages are not stable; those who have not had four and even six or seven wives successively are rare.”⁴⁶⁶

After this presentation of Fr. Brard’s method, we must say a few words about Bishop Hirth’s method, known as the “Saint Paul” method. This method aims at the development of proselytism among Christians:

“The Holy Father [Pius X] is particularly interested in our way of evangelising, and wishes us never to abandon this method of creating and developing proselytism in the hearts of our neophytes. It is, he says, the way of St. Paul, who by this means spread the faith so successfully around him; it is the right way, the only way that is properly Catholic.”⁴⁶⁷

462 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated July 20, 1903 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 09081–095083.

463 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 1st, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 148, July – August 1901, 121–125.

464 Annual report of Save: 1st July 1903 – 1st July 1904, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, N° 114, March 1905, 139–144: **“... the King told us to instruct the Bahutu if we wanted to, but to leave the Batusi alone”**.

465 *Ibid.*

466 *Ibid.*: ‘Some cultivate three days for their chief and three days for themselves the whole year; they build for the sub-chief, the chief and the king; pay taxes in kind to the sub-chief, the chief and the king; provide them with firewood so scarce in Rwanda; spend their nights guarding the chiefs’ herds; carry the chiefs and their wives in litter etc..... In the countries further away from the capital, the inhabitants are freer and have fewer chores to do.’

467 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated May 21, 1909 to his confreres, A.G. M.Afr., Casier 303, N° 096355.

Bishop Hirth, who lived outside the country, administered his posts in Rwanda by letter. The fact that he did not trust the superiors of these posts,⁴⁶⁸ caused great discomfort among his missionaries who, in addition, did not read his “directives and instructions.”⁴⁶⁹ In 1907, he changed his way of doing things, appointing Fr. Classe as vicar general in Rwanda. Together, they would run the posts. Responding to critical remarks of Fr. Brard (1906), he published a directory for catechumens in 1908, which was corrected and reissued in 1909⁴⁷⁰. In this directory, he disavowed the use of coercion and the use of foreign auxiliaries. He wanted evangelization to be done discreetly. According to him, missionaries should recruit the first catechumens from young adults between 18 and 25 years of age, not from children. This is why he did not appreciate the first baptisms in Save in 1903.⁴⁷¹ Catechumens should come freely to the post where they are employed as workers as far as possible. They should be taught “conviction”, rather than the letter of the great truths.⁴⁷² For him, all Christians are called to be voluntary catechists, but he accepts that they receive gifts. He suggests: “A cubit of Bombay for each conquest, reserving the chain for those who teach five people to read.”⁴⁷³ In a foundation post, he allows catechumens to be baptized after two years of training provided, they live in the vicinity of the post. This rule was applied in Nyundo in 1903.⁴⁷⁴ Very early on, he thought about the formation of an indigenous clergy. In 1903, he opened two seminaries in Rubia, one small and one large.⁴⁷⁵ Father Knoll, a German teacher, compared them to a barracks where

468 A. Brard: Notes proposed to Bishop Livinhac on the occasion of the 1906 General Chapter, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095349.

469 Letter from Fr. Schumacher dated September 28, 1908 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097080–097116.

470 Mgr Hirth, *Directoire pour le catéchuménat à l’usage des missionnaires du Nyanza méridional* (1^{ère} édition), Alger, 1908, 46 And *Directoire pour le catéchuménat à l’usage des missionnaires du Nyanza méridional* (2^{ème} édition), Alger, 1909, 78

471 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated July 20, 1903 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095081–095083.

472 Instructions from Bishop Hirth dated February 15, 1905 for Rwaza, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098016.

473 *Ibid.*

474 Letter from Fr. Classe dated October 8, 1903 to the president of the work of Saint-Pierre-Claver, in *Les Missions d’Alger*, N° 168, November – December 1904, 428–432.

475 Kilaini, M. M. P.: *The Catholic Evangelization of Kagera in North-West Tanzania. The pioneer period: 1892–1912*, Rome 1990, 213–214.

everyone had to carry out the orders received without recriminating.⁴⁷⁶ In 1913, Bishop Hirth opened a minor and a major seminary in Kabgayi. At that time, he revised his method of evangelization following the arrival of German Protestants and the ineffectiveness of his system of systematic proselytizing.⁴⁷⁷ He revalued the role of catechists. With his permission, Fr. Schumacher, a German White Father, introduced Catholic Action in 1912,⁴⁷⁸ by creating the hill councils (*inama*), first in Kabgayi and then in Rwaza in 1916.⁴⁷⁹ The leaders of these councils were elected by the Christians, who were henceforth better supervised and animated to participate in the evangelization of Rwandan society and also better organized to defend their interests before the local indigenous authorities. It remains to be seen whether the creation of the hill councils has given rise to a new conception of power.

In Save, the first catechumens were children of at least twelve years old. They were “simple, good, docile, easy to lead, and very keen on civilization.”⁴⁸⁰ In addition, they were fatherless or motherless.⁴⁸¹ They liked to come to the post to have fun and to learn the lessons:

476 Letter from Fr. Léonard dated July 26, 1909 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095204: “Fr. Knoll, who out of virtue and patriotism would like to remain at Rubia at all costs, writes to me as follows: “The bishop writes in the school regulations: “No one will be punished. The children are free to come and stay’. What do we do in practice? There are some who absolutely want to leave, seeing that they do nothing here, that they don’t belong here. And we tell them clearly, I forbid you to leave... We don’t ask, we don’t question, we don’t consult the Fathers (speaking of Bishop). **How can you love your superiors, carry out their orders with love, see in them the person of Christ, how can you believe in their sentiments of charity? For me, one is only in a barracks in which one must execute orders ruthlessly. It is difficult to sanctify oneself with such a life. You see that everyone is unhappy, so how can you be happy.** True piety, the exercise of perfection, does not go hand in hand with interior discontent... There are times when one seriously asks oneself if one should not look elsewhere for a more secure way to heaven”.

477 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated January 1st, 1912 to his missionaries, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111117–111123.

478 Mbonimana, *l’instauration*, 274.

479 Rauscher, Fridolin: *Die Mitarbeit der einheimischen Laien am Apostolat in den Missionen der Weißen Väter*, Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung 1953, 280–289.

480 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

481 *Ibid*: “Five years ago, smallpox took away one fifth of the population; one child in ten lost its father or mother, and often both. They live with their brothers or sisters, uncles

"After the catechisms, the receptions. Our rooms are then invaded by the natives who come to get to know the Fathers better. This is the time to try to interest them. So far, we have managed to amuse them at little cost: the singing of a hymn, even a Latin one, delights them with admiration; a piece of music box leaves them speechless. Or we show them a few chromolithographs which provoke the most extraordinary questions and give us the opportunity to teach them about religion."⁴⁸²

All were fed and clothed for free.⁴⁸³ Those who came from far away were accommodated in a boarding school where they lived in teams of seven to eight children per hut under the authority of a *Muganda*.⁴⁸⁴ Those who lived closer to home studied as day students, receiving a daily attendance bonus⁴⁸⁵. Fr. Brard says that these pupils attend school freely, but Bishop Hirth says that it is out of obligation or to escape the work at the house.⁴⁸⁶ In 1903, the boarding school had 157 boys and 29 girls, and the day school 1,116 children.⁴⁸⁷ Later, the first Rwandan catechists were chosen from among the boarding school's former students. For Fr. Brard, the school is above all a means of forming good Christians. The formation of an intellectual elite seems to him useless and even harmful:

or aunts; however, they are more comfortable with us, despite the fact that their uncles and aunts bear the name of their father and mother and that they are well treated".

482 Letter from Fr. Pouget dated January 20, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 154, July – August 1902, 354–356.

483 Letter from Fr. Brard to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 145, January–February 1901, 8–16: "We could receive a thousand of these children, they turn up every day and the children themselves come to bring them to us; but we have to limit ourselves, because they cost money to feed and clothe".

484 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

485 Hirth's account of his journey at the end of December 1900 to his brother, Abbe Ernest, A.G. M.Afr., O60, N° 095308: "It is very nice this swarm of marmots, who, following in the footsteps of their elders, are already making their way to the mission every day in order to earn a little more paper. You should know that each worker, at the end of his day, receives a small piece of stamped paper which he only has to present later when he has the required number of papers to be issued with a cloth. It takes about thirty of these papers to make enough money to buy a pair of underpants when you are still a little boy. Our kids are careful to pinch their small supply of notes between the two parts of a stick that they have split; this stick with the notes never leaves them, they carry it high every morning when they come back to work; they are too afraid that they will be refused for work and sent back. And then at home the rats might attack the money!"

486 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated July 20, 1903 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 095081–095083.

487 *Ibid.*

“It is enough that our neophytes know how to read their books of piety, and almost all of them learn it among themselves, even the women. Scholars cost a lot to teach and are, especially among the Blacks, proud, downgraded and a nuisance for the missionaries who will not soon have a job to give them. A good, unpretentious neophyte, who cultivates his field and his banana plantation by the sweat of his brow, will always be a source of consolation for us.”⁴⁸⁸

Following the reorganization of the mission in 1903, the school lost its importance.⁴⁸⁹ The first catechumens actively contributed to the inculturation of the Christian religion. Proud of their culture, they believe that the missionaries will adapt their religion “to the customs of the country”⁴⁹⁰. They call themselves “ntole – chosen”, or “bagaragwa – servants” and hope to receive oxen, cloth, etc. from the White Fathers. Since they already believe in a Creator God, they readily agree to obey his commands; he “gives them the beans and potatoes.”⁴⁹¹ They are excited to learn that they can become the sons of “a great King” who calls them to be with him forever even beyond death.⁴⁹² The Court, however, cannot tolerate this idea of *lèse-majesté*, which endangers the foundation of the kingdom based on the principle that the king is the representative of God.⁴⁹³ The population was aware of the existence of a day of rest every five days. In Save, this day will be abolished and replaced by Sunday rest whose violations is punished with a fine. Someone who harvests potatoes on that day will be fined two goats.⁴⁹⁴ Thus, obedience to a foreign king and respect for Sunday gave rise to a confrontation between Christianity and paganism, aggravated by the behaviour of the *Baganda* auxiliaries. They tore down amulets and destroyed the small huts dedicated to the spirits of the ancestors. The first Christians believed themselves to be superior to the “pagans”:

“As a result of accurate but incomplete and therefore dangerous teaching, they believe themselves to be superior because they are baptized, they think they are protected by us and treat the chiefs with haughtiness, they threaten to denounce them to us, they mock them. In our stations, it is not unusual for them to be rude to the

488 Annual report of Save: 1st July 1904 – 1st July 1905, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, N° 125, March 1906, 164–170.

489 Letter from Fr. Classe dated August 14, 1909 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 11110 (095212–095217): “In our schools, which are vegetating, recruitment is difficult, the most intelligent escape us because it is almost exclusively religious instruction that is taught. German is not taught, Kiswahili is no longer taught: only a little reading and writing remains. Nothing attracts”!

490 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 8, 1902 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098523.

491 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 1st, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 148, July – August 1901, 121–125.

492 *Ibid.*

493 Mbonimana, *l'instauration*, 206–211.

494 Letter from Fr. Brard dated February 1st, 1901 to Bishop Livinhac, in *Les Missions d'Alger*, N° 148, July – August 1901, 121–125.

leaders: they greet us but do not greet them; they come to listen to our conversations, take them to task, accusing them in front of us, asking them to justify their actions towards them. Is not the missionary's silence a tacit approval of such practices"⁴⁹⁵?

The feeling of belonging to an elite gave the first Christians the strength to face the hostilities of their surroundings. Through their baptism, they were protected by the White Fathers, which allowed them to challenge their leaders. To Fr. Brard's despair, some of them were arrogant and even violent towards their pagan brothers:

"... quite a few blows have been dealt by our Christians to pagans who come to complain to us, of course; we do them as much justice as possible, because our Christians are often in the wrong, even though they have been falsely accused several times. Another, in Lubona, who had gone to prevent a sacrifice, was almost knocked out... Another, aged 14, fought with his mother who, whether on purpose or not, had put meat from a sacrificed ox on his bed. Others, from Muhiriri [Mwulire], went to Mutenda, 8 or 10 in number, to steal the meat of a sacrificed ox and beat the priest. We have them judged, paid and severely punished by their respective chiefs in order to prevent the others from wanting to do it again. This way of doing things would ruin the mission; but these poor Negroes think nothing of it; perhaps they still believe they are doing the right thing, and yet we repeat to them at every moment that the natives must be allowed to carry out sacrifices and sorceries, that it is by instructing them that they will prevent them from acting in this way and by praying for them; that we must be good to all, humble and helpful"⁴⁹⁶.

As soon as they arrived, the White Fathers made great efforts to create good relations with the king, forgetting to court the great chiefs. They were allowed to establish a school in the capital. The Court gave the impression that it was only interested in the benefits of Western civilization and not in the Christian message, which worried the White Fathers. In 1906, they succeeded in founding the post of Kabgayi, "according to the true principles of the Gospel,"⁴⁹⁷ in an

495 Letter from Fr. Classe dated March 17, 1913 to his confreres, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111218–111219.

496 Heremans, Ntezimana, *Journal*, 142.

497 Fr. Malet's visiting card for Marangara (Kabgayi), dated 19 December 1907, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097080–097081: "**Your post is the latest to be established in Ruanda. It is only a few months old and yet you have already done a lot. Above all, I hasten to say that everything has been done gently and according to the true principles of the Gospel. Here there have been no drudgery, no requisitions, and nothing of the kind that has sometimes so deeply wounded the people elsewhere. So I hope that on the hills you are looked upon not as conquerors or kings but as men of prayer and messengers of that Jesus who came to bring peace to men of good will.**"

area where the political elite had ample pasture. For the first time, the White Fathers were not seen “as conquerors or kings.” When German pastors settled in Rwanda in 1907, the conversion of the native authority became an obsession, especially as this authority was willing to convert to Protestantism.⁴⁹⁸ The fear that the country would be divided into two denominations was real.⁴⁹⁹ Catholics risked finding themselves in a situation of inferiority.⁵⁰⁰ In December 1907, the regional priest, Fr. Malet, reminded his *confrères* of Lavigerie’s instructions concerning the conversion of the chiefs without saying a word about the foundation of a Christian kingdom:

“A. – Because they are the representatives of God, and as our Founder says: ‘It must not be omitted to point out to them that Catholic doctrine is entirely favorable to their power, since it teaches that they are the true representatives of God on earth from the temporal point of view. B. – Because their great influence will be almost useful or harmful to the cause of the Faith, depending on whether these leaders are for or against us: ‘What is important’, the Founder said again, ‘is to win the minds of the leaders. We shall therefore make a special effort, knowing that by winning over one chief we shall do more for the advancement of the Religion than by winning over hundreds of poor blacks in isolation. Once the chiefs are converted, they will draw all the rest after them. The real way to win the chiefs will be to take their power seriously, to show them confidence, to give them some gifts which may be more agreeable to them:’”⁵⁰¹

In 1913, the White Fathers had to face the German prejudice that they were not capable of being impartial and the accusation of founding an anti-governmental party. Fr. Classe, at the behest of Bishop Hirth, asked his confreres to approach the native authority: “Whether the chiefs are Batutsi or Bahutu, it matters little, we have only to recognize those to whom God has given the authority.”⁵⁰² “By a wise direction of our Christians”, he said, “let us lead the chiefs to love the Christians, to count on them, to be able to do without them: that day we will have assured the future”:

I implore you to always follow this same line of conduct, whether it is a question of the material work to be done or the catechumens to be recruited”.

498 Annual report of Save: 1st July 1904 – 1st July 1905, in *Chronique Trimestrielle*, N° 125, March 1906, 164–170: ‘Already great Batutsi say highly that the Bahutu are for the Bafransa and the Batutsi for the Badatchi (Germans)’.

499 Letter from Bishop Hirth dated January 1st, 1912 to his missionaries, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111117–111123.

500 Letter from Fr. Classe dated April 28, 1911 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 11110 (095226–095230).

501 Visiting card of Fr. Malet for Save, made on 14 November 1907, A.G. M.Afr., N° 097051.

502 Letter from Fr. Classe dated March 17, 1913 to his confreres, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111218–111219.

“To prevent the bad proselytism of certain Christians who raise postulants more or less by force, oblige the leaders to favor this condemned recruitment, threaten them when they do not support it to their liking, accepting or being given by force pickaxes, pumas, goats so as not to instruct such and such, or tolerate, when they have nothing to do with it, sacrifices. These recruits do great harm to the Mission, and it is necessary to stop or better to transform without hesitation, if these recruiters are capable of understanding the true method, this disastrous activity. We must also watch our catechists: often they are not sufficiently trained and would be inclined to want to impose themselves, to play the leader, to see too quickly enemies in these leaders whose confidence they should try to win. Above all, let us not be too credulous and lose patience when we are told that a leader prevents the action of a catechist, that he protects or favors a Christian or a fallen catechumen. It is not through the leaders that we must bring back lost Christians, nor is it through them that we must do the mission. To ask them to provide us with catechumens is contrary to the indications of our Directory; these chores of catechism only exasperate chiefs and subjects, without giving us Christians capable of persevering.”⁵⁰³

The complexity of Rwandan society will give rise to great tensions between the White Fathers. The first was caused by a dispute over the method of evangelization to be followed, i.e. between that of Fr. Brard and that of Bishop Hirth. The second was linked to the difference between the north of the country, where the population was not very submissive to the king, and the south of the country, where royal authority had been absolute since the departure of the *Baganda*. As a result of this situation, the White Fathers divided into two camps: the “North” camp (Rwaza – Nyundo – Mibirizi) and the “South” camp (Save – Zaza).⁵⁰⁴ The “North” camp will organise military expeditions to impose its authority. The “South” camp, of which Fr. Brard was a member, disapproved of these expeditions.⁵⁰⁵ A third tension was linked to the dispute between the White Fathers concerning the attitude to be taken towards the indigenous authority.⁵⁰⁶ Some wanted a rapprochement with them. Others refused to submit to it. A fourth tension was caused by the Germanisation of the White Fathers’ posts. In 1911, Bishop Felix of Trier wrote to Bishop Livinhac:

“In the governmental regions, there is much concern about the large number of foreign missionaries, Swiss, French and Dutch, who are in our three vicariates. In some circles, it is said that our Fathers speak only French among themselves. It is even claimed that our Swiss, Dutch, Luxembourg and Alsatian Fathers, who know German, do not use this language among themselves. I do not know whether these rumors are true, but I think it is good that you know. If my information is correct, these rumors come from officers who have been in the colonies, and who find it strange that in a German colony the missionaries do not use this language. They are very sensitive

503 *Ibid.*

504 Frs. Barthélemy, Classe, Wekerlé, Dufays, and Loupias were in the “North” camp and Frs. Brard, Pouget, Smoor, Tribout, and Lecoindre were part of the “South” camp.

505 C. Lecoindre, *op.cit.* A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459.

506 *Ibid.*

on this point. **It would therefore be highly desirable that our Fathers, in the interest of the souls they wish to win for Our Lady, should impose on themselves the embarrassment of speaking German in the presence of persons connected with the government.** It would even be desirable that when German employees or officers visit, French missionaries who do not know German should be kept away. If they cannot be occupied outside, they should at least keep to themselves as much as possible and leave the conversation to their German colleagues.”⁵⁰⁷

In 1913, Fr. Donders spoke to Bishop Livinhac about this same embarrassing issue:

“I have nothing special to say about relations with the government; we have so few relations. It is a blessing, for although out of 7 missionaries there are only 2 Frenchmen, so little notice is taken of the advice given that even the words ‘Father’ and ‘Brother’, ‘Mother’ and others are (almost) exclusively used. The children don’t know a note of the national song, but there are many French barrack terms that are used. When you come from Germany, you are turned upside down; people are told at every opportunity that we are the French as opposed to the Badaki [Germans]. All this is done very simply, without any preconceived ideas, it seems, because on the feast of the Emperor they did not raise the flag, which does not exist, but excited the Christians so sincerely and warmly to pray for the sovereign. Hurel it was deliberate, since he said it in the presence of everyone. I don’t think we are aware of the reality of things. As for me, I don’t dare say anything, because I am new and I don’t want to get mixed up in things where I don’t see any remedy since the one applied by the Superiors is ineffective. I cannot say any more; but my heart is heavy. The great argument of the Protestants which they have been throwing at me lately, very naively, is that we are French and they are Germans; this is their argument to obtain all the concessions of the government and to trick us effectively.”⁵⁰⁸

A year later, in 1914, Fr. Lecoindre, a Frenchman, requested his transfer for this reason.⁵⁰⁹ It should be noted that the first Belgian White Fathers arrived in Rwanda only in 1916! Finally, a fifth and last tension was linked to the creation of the vicariate of Kivu (German Rwanda, Urundi and Buha) at the end of 1912. The White Fathers of Rwanda and those of Urundi did not get along, which caused an unprecedented crisis of authority.⁵¹⁰ Fr. Classe emerged victorious from this crisis in 1921.

507 Letter from Mgr Félix, Bishop of Trier, dated February 2, 1911 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N°41106.

508 Letter from Fr. Donders dated July 3, 1913 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N° 112013.

509 Letter from Fr. Lecoindre dated January 15, 1914 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr., N°°112015–112016.

510 Linden, Ian: *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda (1900–1990)*, Paris: Karthala 1999, 195.

Conclusion

Looking at the four dimensions of mission, it is clear that the evangelization of Rwanda has a complex and difficult history. It was carried out from a missiology and an anthropology, today completely outdated. And it was carried out in a violent political context linked to the colonization of Africa by the German and French West. Several cultures clashed in the greatest misunderstanding, which upset the traditional Rwandan universe.

The different protagonists, namely the White Fathers, the population, the indigenous authority and the colonial authority, each pursued their own objective, trying to use the other to achieve their own. The colonial authority wants to make the colony profitable; the indigenous authority wants to strengthen its power, the population wants to improve its living conditions and the White Fathers want to evangelize the country. Between these four protagonists, alliances are made and broken, in the name of their contradictory interests hidden behind a mask of hypocrisy. Apparently, they did not function as homogeneous blocs. On the contrary, the German women, the White Fathers, the Court, as well as the population were divided between them.

As for the relations between the Court and the White Fathers, they were less tense than some have claimed. The fact remains that the White Fathers enjoyed unrestricted religious freedom until 1903. The arrival of the Protestants (1907) awakened their desire to convert the political elite. The relations between the White Fathers and the Germans, especially with Kandt, deserve to be reviewed. There is the role played by the *Baganda* auxiliaries and the role played by the early Christians. Both contributed to evangelization in an active way by imposing their views on the White Fathers. Neither the *Baganda* auxiliaries nor the early Christians were subservient to their patrons. In this sense, the White Fathers, despite their technical superiority, were not masters of the situation. The inculturation of their message was clearly beyond their control, which will give rise to a Rwandan Christianity. The link between economic development and the work of evangelization of the White Fathers and the change in mentalities should be further clarified. The fact remains that the White Fathers were more than simple evangelizers. They were pioneers in the study of the geography, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, history and linguistics of the country. At the same time, they were the first agronomists, architects, entrepreneurs, teachers and nurses of modern Rwanda.

Finally, one may ask whether the White Fathers evangelized according to the still current criteria of the Gospel, according to the instructions of the Catholic Church, according to the instructions of their Society? In 1908, Bishop Hirth

already recognized that he and his missionaries sometimes used means that were too human, means that Jesus never taught. Their motives led them to go to the end according to the principle that the end justifies the means. Until 1916, nothing was decided for them: the first Christian community remained very fragile. Following the German defeat, the cards were redistributed between the protagonists, but this time clearly in favor of the White Fathers.

Given the complexity of the history of the evangelization of Rwanda, it is essential that historians of Rwandan and Western cultures study it together. This will allow for a better evaluation and interpretation of the documents. Only teamwork can guarantee, in the long term, the seriousness and validity of an interesting historical work, open to the future.

Annex

N° 1. Letter from brother Herménégilde of 25 August 1907 to Bishop Livinhac⁵¹¹

Mibirisi, Our Lady of Good Counsel

25 August 1907

To His Grace,

Monsignor Livinhac

Superior General

My Lord and most Venerable Father!

May I, poor brother Herménégilde, be permitted to address to Your Grandeur most humbly and respectfully my poor letter which I have long since collected to address to Your Grandeur, although I am absolutely unaware whether I still have the right to cry out to Your Grandeur and to call You my most Venerable Father, given that since the very holy year 1906, when according to the Constitutions of the Society, I was to take my perpetual commitment as a brother, I have been left without an oath for a whole year, without even doing me the honour of letting me know why this delay or rather this neglect and abandonment in which I have been left. I have longed and longed to make my commitment and at the present time I still long to be able to do so as soon as possible. But what have they done to me? I was left waiting and waiting and nothing more, without an oath, without any commitment. I don't think it is charitable to leave me in the middle of insurmountable difficulties and thus implicitly defame me and make me suspect in the eyes of the other missionaries in Rwanda. This is a punishment that has been unjustly imposed on me and for this I respectfully complain to Your Grandeur. I know that Your Grace had no knowledge of my case, but neither did His Grace Bishop Hirth, because in the first months of 1906, I had formally asked His Grace Bishop Hirth to admit me to my Oath and in all my letters to His Grace, I only asked and asked so that in the Holy Year of 1906, I could make my Oath. But what was the result? Without an oath and without any commitment for a whole

511 Letter from Brother Herménégilde dated August 25, 1907 to Bishop Livinhac, A.G. M.Afr. N° 070825. Brother Herménégilde (1876–1962) used hesitant French. For this reason, it is difficult to translate it into English. Before joining the White Fathers, Brother Herménégilde was called Nicolas Klein.

year and still without any commitment at the present time; may I therefore be allowed to complain about this to Your Grandeur very respectfully. However, Re. Malet has taken the matter in hand and I hope that soon I will have the good fortune to be able to make my commitments. God alone knows the truth of my intentions and that there is no fraud or deception, so why is this punishment being inflicted on me without even letting me know why?

I will also have to speak to Your Grandeur about the very sad things of Mulera. But for this I must go into great detail, which I cannot do because of the very great compromising that could result if by misfortune this letter were to fall into other hands. In one of my letters addressed indirectly to Your Grace by R. Fr. Sweens, I talked about many things. But I have no idea that Your Grace has received it. This letter is dated September 26, 1905, and as so far, I have no news, and the fact that I always expect to give some explanations on many points, I don't know where to stand on these points. I do not really know what to expect on these points. It may be what you will, and for this reason I believe it is my duty to inform Your Grace on certain points of the utmost importance in case it is not yet too late. Your Grace can remedy this before the matter comes to a head on the part of the government. I therefore give Your Grace as much explanation as prudence will allow.

Notwithstanding that Fr. Classe said: **“These things must never be known at Maison-Carrée”**. Classe, where he allowed himself to threaten me with expulsion from the Society.

I just said: before the thing comes from the government, and why? Because the government is making inquiries: 1° an officer (named Schulz) questioned me on these points while I was still at the Mulera, 2° Captain M. Von Gravert, chief of Usumbura, asked in Mulera who is this Crassi (N.B. name given by the natives for Fr. Classe and [his companion]⁵¹² a second one who stole cows in Ruanda and that on several occasions so that the King Msinga of Ruanda complained about it, 3° the present Lieutenant of Kisengne said here at the mission a few weeks ago that he has placed chiefs on the mountains of the Mulera who every 3 months have to inform him (about what?) For what? It is known and please to God that the government don't gets to know the whole truth.

So here it is:

1° On 19 March 1904 on a badly founded alarm, Fr. Classe and Fr. Dufays with the auxiliaries of the mission left the Post to go and attack the tribe of Bagaroula⁵¹³ south west of the Mulera, returning at 10 o'clock in the evening (from

512 These two words have been deleted from the text.

513 Bagarura.

between 1–2 hours in the afternoon) with a very large booty of cows, goats and sheep and leaving numerous victims. This booty was distributed in the vicinity of the mission. The mission was created on unjust grounds. May Your Grandeur kindly ask Fr. Classe and Fr. Dufays if the matter is otherwise.

N.B.: we were in no way attacked; to say otherwise is not to say the truth.

2° In spite of the defense of His Grace Mgr Hirth, Father Classe sent the auxiliaries of the mission armed, who did an immense harm by raising the people. The result was that an almost universal revolt occurred, including the vanguard of the tribe that was so badly led on 19 March 1904. So the tribe of Bagavoula already mentioned above, south west, the tribe of Bagezera⁵¹⁴ south, and the tribe of Baioka⁵¹⁵ south east of the mission unanimously revolted against the mission to massacre us all together the night of July 28 and the night of July 29 1904, they had to come to massacre us and the mission to destroy. It should be noted that on 22 July 1904, after mitigation, our auxiliaries sent as I said above, were attacked, one massacred and about 6 seriously wounded; Fr. Dufays who went to their rescue mane milit⁵¹⁶..., was also surrounded and in great danger. Fr. Dufays, who went to their aid, was also surrounded and in very great danger. On these facts the Bougoye Fathers were asked for help⁵¹⁷, and Fr. Barthélemy and Loupias came on 30 July 1904.

As result 3°, 1 August 04 great attack mane mil... towards the Bagezera, great devastation, deaths, wounded, booty.

4° 2 August 04, idem at... man... mil... towards the Baioka, result: idem, d[eaths], w[ounded]. devas...

5°, 4 August 04 great morning attack mane mil... towards th]e Bagavoula, result: 2 of our auxiliaries seriously injured, one died, the other geri, idem great devas... d[eaths]... w[ounded]... booty.

5 August 04, departure of Fr. Barthélemy bringing all these booty, was then attacked west of the mission where he had nearly to be massacred.

That, my Lord and most Venerable Father, is my explanation for this time (some facts here and there). To Fr. Malet I will give even more lively ones, but I will tell the truth and I will not let my mouth be closed again, neither by Father Classe nor by anyone else.

514 Bagesera.

515 Bayoka.

516 Military hand.

517 Nyundo post.

If therefore Your Grace does not want to believe me, I call upon the testimony of Frs. Classe, Dufays, Barthélemy and Loupias and to the thousands of men who have attended these things done by the 4 named Fathers and myself by sending me there by order of Fr.

These are therefore the things that Father Classe had forbidden me twice to speak about to His Grace Bishop Hirth and which were not to be known at Maison-Carrée (according to Father Classe). His Grace Monsignor Hirth himself was warned against me and very politely closed my mouth, I had then asked for an interview with His Grace, he did not even answer me.

Your Grace will understand how frantically the Mulera Fathers (Class and Dufays) have acted against me, to make me disgraced by our respected Major Superiors, to make me shamefully expelled from the Society, and thus I will not be able to do anything for them. I do not ask Your Grandeur to do justice to me, no, the eternal judge will take care of that, he will defend the orphan and the oppressed and will not leave unpunished, the crimes of the Mulera.

In all simplicity, I give this knowledge to Your Grace.

Please accept, Monsignor and most Venerable Father, my most respectful submission and obedience of one who for the moment no longer knows if he can be called

Brother
Herménégilde

The original version of the letter in French⁵¹⁸:

A Sa Grandeur,
Monseigneur Livinhac
Supérieur Général

Monseigneur et très Vénéré Père !

Qu'il me soit permie à moi pauvre frère Herménégilde d'atresser à Votre Grandeur très humblement et très respectueusement ma pauvre chetife lettre que depuis longtemps j'avai recolue d'atressé à Votre Grandeur, quoique j'ignore absolument, si encore à l'heure actuelle, je le droit d'écrier à Votre Grandeur, et de Vous appeler mon très Vénéré Père, étant donner que depuis la toute sainte 1906 tème, ou celon les Constitutions de la société, je devai prentre mes engagement perpétuelle comme frère, on m'a laissé sans serment toute une année, sans

⁵¹⁸ Brother Herménégilde had a poor knowledge of the French language. (Stefaan Minnaert)

même me faire l'honneur de me faire savoir pourquoi ce retard ou mieu ce délaissement et cet abandon dans lequel on m'a laissé. J'ai désiré et très ardemment désiré de faire mes engagements et à l'heure actuelle, je désire encore très ardemment de pouvoir le faire au plus tôt. Mais qu'est-ce qu'on m'a fait ? On me laisse attendre et toujours attendre et rien de plus, sans serment, sans nulle engagement. Je ne crois pas que ceci est charitable de me planter de la sorte au milieu de encoignes et de difficultés insurmontables et ainsi implicitement me difamer et me rendre suspect aux yeux des autres missionnaires du Ruanda. C'est une punition qu'on m'a imposé injustement et de ceci je m'en plains très respectueusement à Votre Grandeur. J'atteste que Votre Grandeur en avait nulle connaissance de mon cas, mais il ne put de même de Sa Grandeur Monseigneur Hirth, car dans les premiers mois de 1906, j'avais formellement demandé à Sa Grandeur Monseigneur Hirth pour l'admission à mon Serment et dans toutes mes lettres pour Sa Grandeur, je me faisais que demander et demander pour qu'à la toute Sainte 1906, je pouvais faire mon Serment. Mais quel résultat-il ? Sans serment et sans nulle engagement pendant toute une année et à l'heure actuelle encore sans nulle engagement ; qu'il me soit donc permis de m'en plaindre à Votre Grandeur très respectueusement. Toute fois le Re. P. Malet a pris la chose en mains et j'espère que bientôt j'aurai le bonheur de pouvoir faire mes engagements. Dieu seul connaît la sincérité de mes intentions et qu'il n'y-a ni fraude ni tromperie, pour quoi donc m'inflige-t-on cette punition sans même me faire savoir pourquoi ?

J'aurai également à parler à Votre Grandeur des choses bien tristes du Mulera. Mais pour cela il me faudra entrer dans de grandes détails que je ne puis faire à cause des très grandes compromissions qu'en pourrai résulter si par malheur cette lettre tombera entre d'autres mains. Dans une de mes lettres adressée indirectement à Votre Grandeur par le R.P. Sweens, j'en ai parlé de bien de choses. Mais j'ignore absolument que Votre Grandeur en a reçu connaissance. Cette lettre est datée du 26 Septembre 1905, et comme jusqu'à présent j'en ai eu aucune nouvelle, et étant donné que je m'attends toujours à donner quelque explication sur bien de points, ne sais-je trop à quoi m'en tenir sur ces points. Peu en être ce que vous voulez, ce pour cela que je croi de mon devoir d'enformer Votre Grandeur sur certains points de la plus haute importance pour dans le cas où il ne sera pas encore trop tard. Votre Grandeur puis y remédier avant que la chose ne vienne directement de la part du gouvernement. Je donne donc à Votre Grandeur d'explications autant que la prudence me le permette.

Non obstant que le P. Classe a dit : « Ces choses ne doivent jamais se savoir à Maison-Carrée ». Paroles textuelles du P. Classe, où il se permit de me menasser d'expulsion de la Société.

Je vient de dir : avant que la chose ne vient de la part du gouvernement, et pourquoi ? Parce que le gouvernement fait des enquetes : 1° un officier (nommé Schulz) m'a questionné sur ces points lorce que j'étais encore au Mulera, 2° le Capitaine M. Von Gravert chef d'Usumbura a demandé au Mulera qui est ce Crassi (N.B. nom que donnent les indigènes pour P. Classe et [son companion])⁵¹⁹ un deuxième qui ont volé des Vaches dans le Ruanda et qu'à plusieurs reprises le Roi Msinga du Ruanda s'en est plaint, 3° le Lieutenant actuelle de Kisengne disai ici à la mission il y a quelques semaines qu'il a passé des cheffes sur les montagnes du Mulera qui tout les 3 mois le doit renseigner (sur quoi ?) Pour quoi ? La chose est connue et plaice à Dieu que le gouvernement n'arrive à savoir toute la vérité.

Donc voici :

1° Le 19 mars 1904 sur une alerte mal fondée, le P. Classe et P. Dufays avec les auxiliaires de la mission ont gitént le Post pour aller attaqué en mane militari la tribue de Bagavoula⁵²⁰ sud ouest du Mulera, sont revenue à 10 heures du soir (à partir entre 1-2 heures après miti) avec un très grand butin en Va... chev... et mout... et laissant de victimes nombreux. Ces butin fut distribué aux environs de la mission. La mission fut crée sur de revenus injust. Que Votre Grandeur veuille bien demander au P. Classe et P. Dufays si la chose est autrement.

N.B. : nous ne tions nullement attaqué ; qui dit autrement ne dit pas la vérité.

2° Malgré la défense de Sa Grandeur Mgr Hirth, le Père Classe a envoyé les auxiliaires de la mission armés, qui ont fait un tort immense en soulevant les peuples on est reculé se qui suit : une revolte presque universelle s'est produite, bien y comprise la vengeance de la tribue qui fut si mal menée le 19 mars 1904. Donc la tribue de Bagavoula déjà citée plus haut, sud ouest, la tribue de Bagesera⁵²¹ sud, et la tribue de Baioka⁵²² sud est de la mission se sont unanimement révoltés contre la mission pour nous massacrer tous ensemble la nuit du 28 Juillet et la nuit du 29 Juillet 1904, ils devaient venir pour nous massacrer et la mission détruire. A remarquer que le 22 Juillet 1904, après miti, nos auxiliaires envoyer comme je le disai plus haut, furent attaqués, un massacré et environ 6 gravement blessés ; le P. Dufays qui est allé à leur secours mane milit..., était également cerné et un très grand danger. Sur ces entrefaits on demanda secours aux Ps de Bougoye⁵²³, sont venus le P. Barthélemy et Loupias le 30 Juillet 1904.

519 Ces deux mots ont été rayés dans le texte.

520 Bagavura.

521 Bagesera.

522 Bayoka.

523 Le poste de Nyundo.

En resulta 3°, 1 Aout 04 grand attaque mane mil... vers les Bagezera, grande devastation, morts, plaisés, butins.

4° 2 Aout 04, idem at... man... mil... vers les Baioka, résultat : idem, m. b. devas...

5°, 4 Aout 04 grand attaque matinal mane mil... vers les Bagavoula, resultat : 2 nos auxiliares gravement plaiséent, un en est mort, l'autre geri, idem grandes devas... mo... bl... butin.

5 Aout 04, départ du P. Barthélemy amenant tout ces butins, fut alors ataqués ouest de la mission ou il a falu être masacré.

Voilà Monseigneur et très Vénéré Père mes explication pour cette fois (quelque fait joici par ci par là). Au R. P. Malet, j'en donnerai encore de plus ébatant, mais je dirai la vérité et je ne me laisserai plus fermer la bouche ni par le P. Classe ni par an qu'un autre.

Si donc Votre Grandeur ne me veuille croire j'appelle alors au temoignage des PP. Classe, Dufays, Barthélemy et Loupias et à des milliers de hommes qui ont asité à ces chos fait par les nomé 4 Pères et moi en m y envoyant par ordre du P. Classe.

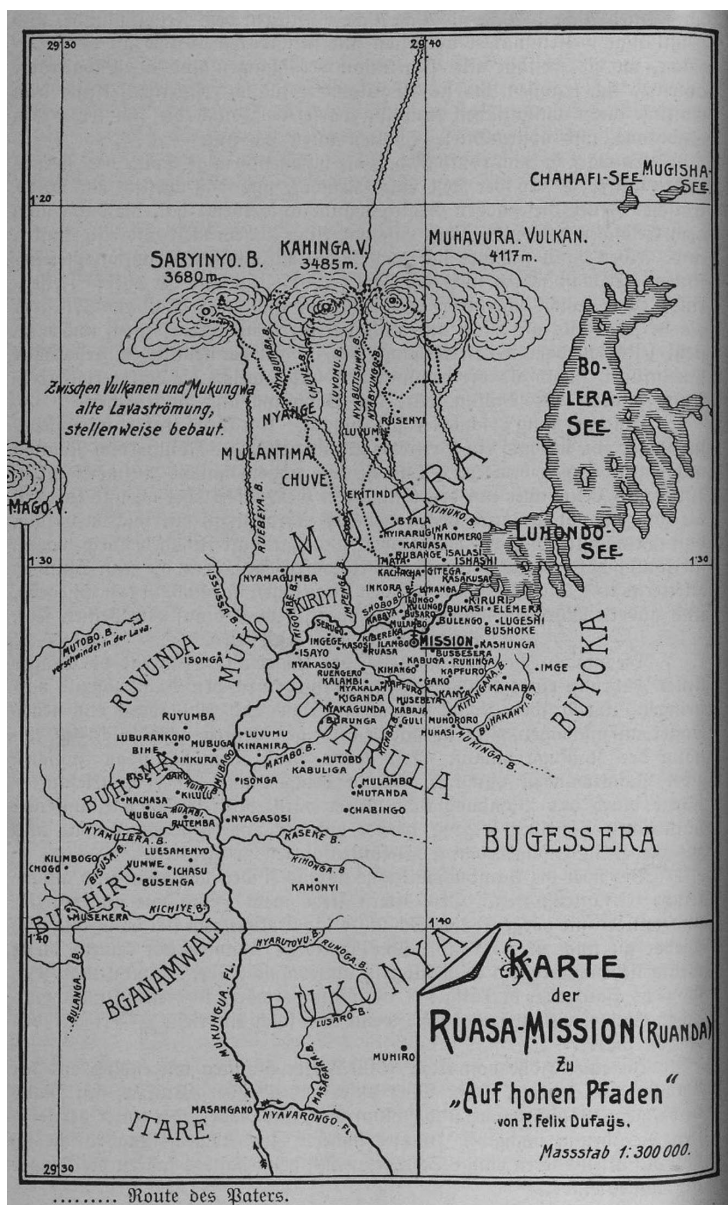
Ce sont donc ces choses que le P. Classe m'avait défentue 2 fois d'en parlé à Sa Grandeur Monseigneur Hirth et qui ne se devai savoir à Maison Carrée (celon le Père Classe). Sa Grandeur Monseigneur Hirth même fut prevenue contre moi et très poliment elle ma fermé la bouche, j'avais alors demandé une antrevue avec Sa Grandeur, elle ne m'a pas même répondu.

Votre Grandeur comprendras maintenant avec qu'elle rage frénétique les Pères du Mulera (Classe et Dufays) ont agient contre moi, pour me faire déacredité auprès de nos Respectés Supérieurs majeurs pour me faire chassé honteusement de la Société et ainsi je ne pourai leurs plus rien apprendre. Je ne demant pas à Votre Grandeur de me faire justice, non, de cela le juge éternelle s'en charchera, il defantra l'orphelin et l'oprimé et qui ne laissera pas impuni, les crimmes du Mulera.

En toute simplicité, je donne de ceci, connaissance à Votre Grandeur.

Daignez agréer Monseigneur et très Vénéré Père ma très respectueusse soumission et obéissance de celui qui pour le moment ne sai plus s'il peu encore se nomé

le frère
Herménégilde



Map of the MULera⁵²⁴

N° 2 Father Malet's report of 1909 regarding Rwaza⁵²⁵

My beloved Father,

I am giving you the two attached notes. They may be of use to you if necessary, and I can add to them orally from time to time if you see fit. I keep many notes and important letters. Perhaps later on, if the superiors need them, they can be used to provide certain information.

I had to humiliate the Fathers Classe and Embil very badly by the very fact that I had to acknowledge the truth. They did not forgive me.

Besides, these two missionaries have very good qualities. It is useless to crack down because of the past, but the past can enlighten the present and perhaps the past will be brought up again one day or another. I pray every day that the Germans will never know what happened in Ruanda and I would like to be ten years later to be sure that these events will not have any adverse effect on the mission.

What I found most outrageous was to see such and such a saintly person scandalized by a few slaps when such serious facts were weighing on them. They are not guilty before God, but in the eyes of men, facts remain facts.

In the German colony, burning a hut is punishable by two years in prison, I am told.

Your child in Our Lord

J. Malet

Notes on the affairs of the Mulera.

The events in this station are certainly the most serious. What some other missionaries are accused of is nothing in comparison.

(1) The Fathers Classe, Dufays and Brother Herménégilde with some Baziba auxiliaries, arrived in Muléra on 8 December 1903. Until the month of March, nothing significant happened. They were looking for building materials.

(2) On 18 or 19 March, one of the auxiliaries, who wanted to requisition the natives to carry the trees, was badly beaten and even chained. Immediately on 19 March, at about 1 a.m., the Fathers Classe and Dufays set off with guns to avenge

524 Afrika-Bote, 1907–1908, 12

525 Father Malet's report of 1909, A.G. M.Afr., N° 098414–098416. The recipient of the report is probably one of the four members of the General Council.

the insult. They killed, it is said, and pillaged. They brought back to the mission more than fifty cows and several hundred goats.

(3) From then on it was enmity. A Munya-Ruanda will never forgive someone who has stolen his cow. Excited by the reports of the auxiliaries, the Fathers lost their heads; at every moment they thought they were in danger; they wrote to the Bishop who asked for help from the fort of Bukoba; they wrote to Usumbura. However, the natives never came near the mission. Their carpentry shop was burnt down, but such things happen everywhere. Moreover, if the malice had been very great, their church and their house could just as easily have been burnt down. Being on the spot, I questioned the Fathers Loupias and Dufays, who were present at the time of the events; I showed them the surrounding hills situated 15 or 20 minutes away and I asked them: "Have you seen the natives on these hills"? Both of them answered: "No, we didn't know where they were". In fact, the missionaries were in a panic and relied on the gossip of their Negro helpers. Father Classe alone knew the language.

(4) Towards the end of June or July 1904, Father Classe wrote to Father Paul Barthélemy, superior of the Bugoyé, to ask him for urgent help. Paul Barthélemy (I say Paul, not Joseph) and Father Loupias immediately rushed to the village, bringing with them two or three hundred Bagoyé. They expected to find the Muléra post blocked on all sides. Nothing, calm everywhere, no enemies anywhere. What was to be done? Should they return or stay? Stay. Why stay? There was a sort of council in which the Fathers Barthélemy, Loupias, Classe and Dufays took part⁵²⁶. They resolved to go and punish the so-called enemy tribes. Three expeditions were therefore carried out in the territory of the three tribes. Father Barthélemy thought that they lived a few minutes from the station. It took 1 ½ or 2 hours to travel to their country. I passed through these tribes on my way to Mulera.

(5) The expeditions took place on 1, 2 and 4 August. Each time there were two or even three missionaries. People were killed; hundreds of huts were burnt; banana plantations were razed to the ground; herds were pillaged. The missionaries themselves killed the natives with their rifles.

(6) After eight days, Father Barthélemy returned to his mission at Bugoyé and Father Loupias stayed at Muléra for some time to help the Fathers Classe and Dufays and to increase their courage. On his way out, Father Barthélemy brought the cows stolen in the expeditions; they had been distributed to the Bagoyé who had come with him. The inhabitants of Muléra⁵²⁷, seeing Father

526 "Fr. Classe did not know what to say or do. In his panic, Father Barthélemy asked him what instructions he had from the Monsignor. Save your honour and your life," he replied. It was then that action was decided".

527 "They wanted their cows back.

Barthélemy alone, attacked him at two o'clock from the station, in a place that I saw. He defended himself bravely, killed several natives and managed to get through. It was this attack and this defence that was recounted in the bulletin and that was put forward to the German officers.

(7) In September 1904, Van Gravert, a resident of Usumbura, arrived in Rwanda to help the Fathers⁵²⁸. His presence was very awkward: on the one hand, it was necessary to admit that he had been alarmed too quickly, and on the other hand, it was necessary to point out certain culprits and prevent him from going to the tribes punished by the Fathers. He would have seen the debris of the burnt huts, the cut banana fields. It was the expulsion of the missionaries from Ruanda. Father Barthélemy, very skillful and always keeping his cool, offered himself as a guide and was accepted with gratitude. He evidently led the officer where the missionaries had not been, but other poor negroes were punished without cause.

(8) It was also necessary to inform in some way Monseigneur, who was twenty days' march away at Marienberg. He had asked for a report; this report was not made. Fr. Classe wrote very vague letters, all of which were first sent unopened to Bugoyé in order to consult each other and to say the same thing⁵²⁹. Father Barthélemy told me that Monseigneur could not know the events through these letters.

(9) In January 1905, the Bishop visited Muléra. It was then mail after mail between the two stations of Bugoyé and Muléra, always with the aim of getting along. The Bishop stayed five days at the Mulera, was ill, had to receive a German officer, in fact he learned nothing, and moreover he did not want to listen to Brother Herménégilde, the only one willing to inform him.

(10) In the same year, Father Sweets visited the house and did not know more; everything was kept secret.

528 "Ruanda was in fact fermenting. Fr. Brard was in a critical situation in Issavi. Bishop Hirth, seeing that three of his couriers had failed to arrive and had returned, warned Bukoba who sent soldiers. Fr. Zuembiel, for his part, informed Van Grawert who left immediately for Issavi. There he was told that there was nothing. He returned to Bugoyé and complained that the Bukoba, to whom this district did not belong, had been called for help and that when he came he was told that there was nothing. It was then that Fr. Barthélemy told him that he had been attacked and took him to the place, but not where the fire had been set, etc. "

529 "The correspondence exchanged was to agree on what to do and what to say to Van Grawert, who had come on an expedition and to whom Fr. Brard had declared that nothing had happened, that it was only noises from the Negroes".

(11) Why was I informed? In 1906, Brother Herménégilde, because of the reports of the Fathers of the Muléra, was not admitted to the oath by the Bishop. He thus remained without oath for a year. I arrived in Rwanda in 1907. The Fathers were certain that the Brother would tell everything and that I would listen to him. On the other hand, they feared that the Brother, having been expelled from the society, would make all these affairs known to the Germans. So they voted for him at the oath. So far there have been no complaints about him, despite his quirks and nervousness; he is a hard worker and a very pious man. The Brother, in fact, wrote everything down for me and certified the truth of the facts by oath. The Fathers Barthélemy, Loupias and Dufays confirmed all the facts to me. Father Classe told me nothing and I did not ask him anything.

(12) The Monsignor was extremely vexed at not having known anything about all these events, just as he was very vexed at having been deceived for so long by Father Couffignal. But he does not want to admit Father Classe's responsibility; he blames everything on Father Barthélemy and on the Brother. Father Classe knew how to win him over and flatter him so well that he will never be considered by him as the most guilty. I do not know whether Father Leonard, who is currently visiting Ruanda, will be informed in his turn.

(13) When these external troubles came to an end, there was war in the community. First there was war between the Fathers Classe, superior, and Dufays, on the one hand, and Father Réant and Brother Herménégilde on the other. When the latter two had left the Mulera, there was war between the Fathers Classe and Embil on the one hand and Father Dufays on the other.

(14) Other unfortunate events occurred. During the 1907 retreat, there was a fight between the Fathers' shepherds and the natives. About fifteen people were killed. I was in Ruanda and did not know about this until 1908.

(15) In August 1908 there was a new alert, a new pillage in which the Fathers were involved. It is true that in Mulera, the natives kill each other for a yes or a no.

I have written all this, not so that the superiors can go back over the past. It is useless, it would even be imprudent, but to fix the responsibilities of each one, and also so that we can draw up rules for the use of the guns if the occasion arises.

In September 1908, I made Father Classe see his wrongdoing; I showed him that I knew everything, how much he had failed to be frank in not making these so serious events known either to Monsignor or to Father Sweens.

Moreover, I have found that this Father has lacked this frankness in other circumstances.

My Lord sometimes communicated to me letters received from him which said about the same people and the same events something quite different from those addressed to me.

On the other hand, this Father has excellent qualities with many flaws that I have pointed out in the report.

J. Malet

N° 3 Reasons that have been very detrimental for the development of the mission in Rwanda⁵³⁰

I°. Politics and bad politics were made.

Rwanda, as a whole, has two classes of citizens:

1° The Batutsi's (i.e. the nobles, the owners) Bahima.

2° The Bahutu's (i.e. the lowly people, the peasants) Banyarwanda.

The Batutsi's number barely 100,000 in the whole country: while the Bahutu's number about two million. The Batutsi's are the chiefs of the country: it is from among them that the king is chosen: they own the whole country: bananas, crops, herds, everything belongs to them. The Bahutu's are simple tenants, working mainly for their lords and masters who sometimes treat them harshly. It's a bit like the Middle Ages, in the time of our ancestors.

Sacred Heart of Issavi, the first station to be founded.

The forty "Baganda" catechists brought by Father Brard made the Bahutu's believe that the missionaries would help them to shake off the yoke of the Batutsi's. Hence, many catechumens. There were up to 3, 000 from the beginning. Immediately the difficulties with the chiefs began... The Baganda's posed as protectors of religion: they prevented Sunday work by imposing fines; they destroyed amulets which they violently tore off the necks of passers-by, set fire to the small huts intended for the ancestors' masks, and opposed, in a word, all the pagan ceremonies by violence... Little by little the Baganda's became almost the chiefs of the villages around the mission... Hence the discontent of the king and the provincial chiefs. An expedition was decided in 1902 against the mission... 2 chiefs had sworn to the king to bring back the heads of the missionaries. Fortunately, the

530 Lecoindre, C.: Raisons qui ont nui beaucoup au développement de la mission au Ruanda, A.G. M.Afr., N° 111459.

Baganda's were warned in time and succeeded in beating away the first crowds around Issavi.

The mission was also too busy judging trials between catechumens and leaders or for things concerning the mission itself v.g. theft of cows or the like. The king would have been so flattered to retain all his authority that, out of deference and timidity, he would have always judged in favour of the mission.

One thief died in the bonds at the mission itself as a result of the ill-treatment he had received from the Baganda's.

Our Lady of the Saints at Kissaka (Nsasa).

Kissaka was once an independent kingdom of Rwanda. In 1875 or 1880, the sons of the last king could not agree on the succession to the throne: one of them called on the Banyarwanda to help him and was victorious. But once the Banyarwanda were settled, they did not want to leave and annexed the country, which became a province under the king of Ruanda. The people of Kissaka were not very happy with this new regime and were more or less rebellious.

The mission was founded in 1900. Father Paul Barthélemy saw it very clearly and preached submission to the king of Ruanda (which is what the Germans wanted)... He had quite a few catechumens... Unfortunately, he did not stay there long enough... Father Van Thiel first and then Father Pouget who succeeded him took sides with the Banyakissaka, giving them more or less the hope of detachment from Ruanda... They favoured the former chiefs, supporters of the former king of Kissaka... They tried to put them back in place or to maintain them... They tried to reinstate or maintain them... They obtained a lot of concessions from these chiefs who, supported by them, advised their people to go to the mission... In 1903 there were more than 4,000 catechumens (and the mission today has barely 1,500 baptised)... The movement came to a halt when the German government publicly reprimanded Father Pouget at the mission itself, and especially when it asked Bishop Hirth to remove him from Nsasa.

Nyundo, founded in 1901.

Father Barthélemy Paul manoeuvred quite well: he seemed to be in favor of the Batutsi's... he only had two or three Baganda's with him, whom he soon chased away... But Bugoye was a province where the authority of the Batutsi's was not very solid... the subordinate chiefs were BAHUTU's who were constantly at odds with each other... sometimes, Father Vekerlé [Weckerlé], pushing for the wheel, and, claiming in the name of his work of the catechumenate, it was necessary to take care of policing the little chiefs... After the departure of Father Barthélemy,

Frs. Vekerle and Huntziger entered into open battle against all these little leaders on the pretext that they were preventing the recruitment of catechumens... The mission seized the spears of these small leaders (there were bundles of them in 1913): this was a sign to these people that they were not even men: for the spear is the sign of virility. These people were frightened by being taken to the dark room (a room with closed shutters, containing a table on which a revolver was placed) while the little chief, transfixed with fear, sat next to the Father Superior: chains were waved in the antechamber to add to the gloomy tone of this macabre scene. It seems that the poor did not dare to move. Nevertheless, they managed to complain to the German fort of Kissenyi: and one fine Sunday after high mass, an officer came and stood on the road leading to the church, taking all the able-bodied men prisoner on the pretext that they did not want to work for their leaders.

Rwasa, Mulera province, founded in 1903 (Frs. Classe, Dufays, Brother Herménégilde).

You know what a bad policy was made there. The missionaries were deceived. They sided with one tribe, neighbouring the mission, against another tribe which had been perpetually at war with the first since time immemorial before the arrival of the Fathers. There was even a real military expedition. But you know how things are. The defeated and plundered tribe, unable to take revenge, gradually drew closer to the mission, and today there are many Christians who are trying to return to their property once plundered by their elder brothers, the Christians of the hostile tribe... Not a year goes by without bloody fights. What palaver at the mission! What a life for a post superior!

Mibirizi, also founded in 1903 (Frs. Zumbiel [Zuembiehl], Cunrath, Verfurth).

Border country between Congo and German Africa. A country of more or less suspicious people. The local chiefs were more or less subservient to the King of Ruanda.

Difficult political situation! Father Zumbiel [Zuembiehl] did not like the Batutsi's: he was even violent at times. He had little influence... He took a liking to a certain subaltern chief who alienated many other chiefs. He baptized this chief: but he was killed one day when he went to claim his cows from a neighbour, claiming to have been sent by the mission.

Murunda, founded in 1909–10 and Rulindo in 1909.

Two peaceful foundations like their founders, Frs. Ecomard and Buisson.

Kabgaye, founded in 1905–1906.

The Bishop, who had preached many times to bring the Batutsi's closer together, wanted to settle among them, in a country where they were more numerous, and close to the capital. This is why he founded Kabgaye. The king prevented this foundation for a long time. Finally, he relented. From then on, frank relations were established between the king and the mission... The Batutsi's began to frequent the missionaries assiduously. Some of them were being educated in secret... In short, the connection was made... it was maintained by numerous visits to King Musinga..... not to mention the gifts offered to His Majesty. This mission moved slowly but freely, surrounded by the sympathy of the neighbouring chiefs. The king even sent the mission a cow with its calf (a sign of great friendship). There were no trials to be tried, no palaver at the mission. All the time was devoted to the works and to the instruction of the people... Good relations with the king and the chiefs are now a tradition in this Kabgaye post. It was the mission that saw the first sons of great chiefs receive baptism.

Nyaruhengeri founded in 1910.

Here too, relations with the chiefs were excellent: today, the king's nephew, who will one day command 50,000 men, is preparing for baptism... There are more than 900 baptized... no catechumens have been brought there for human reasons. It is currently the most interesting mission with its branch in Mugombwa, where there is talk of installing black priests soon.

II. The missionaries were divided on the method to adopt towards the Banyarwanda to convert them.

After a few years of experience, there were tangible results from both approaches.

Some remained in favour of the method of bringing the Batutsi's closer together, with its consequences (submitting all trials to their court... accepting that Christians are sometimes wrong... maintaining relations by means of small gifts... being humble in front of these haughty characters... preventing catechists from violating people... exempting no one from their chores... having a small number of catechumens for many years).

The others kept the "Brard's method" as it was called in Rwanda (Father Brard's feelings towards the Batutsi class have been exaggerated. Later, he would

preach their approach instead. His Baganda's often deceived him: he was sometimes their dupe). It consists of having catechists with a military appearance... to replace the provincial and village chiefs in order to police... to judge trials... to govern or better still to dominate the country... with this of course we have many catechumens among the Batutsi's who have a "Bolshevist" spirit: and there you have all the revolutionaries of the country enrolled in the Catholic religion.

Until recently, there was division among the missionaries on this point. There were discussions and disagreements: the mission took the direction of the superior who was in charge.

III. My Lord was not understood... but above all he was not listened to. Everything was hidden from him, or more or less.

In July 1903, the Bishop made his tour of Rwanda. He went to Nsasa, Issavi, Mibirizi, Nyundo, Rwaswa. He gave the order to send the Baganda's (catechists) home... He was more or less listened to... but not completely... enough nevertheless for the mission to be able to function under normal conditions... After the departure of these catechists, the king threatened the mission, and reportedly sent warriors to attack the mission. The king saw our warriors (the Baganda's) who had gone home and thought that he would easily get rid of us... The Baganda's had therefore alienated the king and the chiefs of the country: they had created the militant party on the first day... At that time the events of Rwaswa (April 1904) showed the people of the country that the missionaries knew how to defend themselves and even attack without the help of the Baganda's... But all this would have been avoided if the authority of the king and the chiefs had been respected from the start.

At that time (September 1904), the Bishop was badly informed about the events, which were hidden from him. Already two parties had been created among the missionaries.

(1) Those who disapproved of the conduct of the Fathers of Rwaswa and Nyundo for their military expeditions: and in this party was Father Brard who himself was not without reproach with his Baganda's, and who had received all the powers of the Monsignor to suppress Rwaswa if he judged it appropriate. He even advised the Rwaswa Fathers to withdraw to Nyundo rather than call us to their aid to go and wage war there.

(2) The party of the Fathers of Nyundo, Rwaswa... who wanted to keep Rwaswa at all costs, because of the many catechumens... etc. etc. The party of the Fathers of Nyundo, Rwaswa... who wanted to keep Rwaswa at all costs, because of the many catechumens... etc. etc. etc.): moreover, these Fathers of the North had a certain

antipathy towards Father Brard (under the pretext that he did not send letters regularly... that he did not help the posts of the North enough materially... that he stopped the supplies intended for the posts or the confreres... etc. etc.). All this or more or less was slander. The post of Mibirizi followed the movement... Ruanda thus comprised two political camps:

(a) Rwasa, Nyundo, Mibirizi (Frs. Barthélemy Paul, Classe, Vekerle [weckerlé], Dufays, Loupias).

(b) Issavi, Nsasa (Frs. Brard, Pouget, Smoor, Tribout, Lecoindre).

It must be said that the way of doing things in these two camps could not be the same from the point of view of relations with the natives, since:

(a) On the one hand, in the North, the Bahutu's were more or less subject to the Batutsi's;

(b) while in the southern posts, the king's authority was uncontested and absolute, especially since the departure of the Baganda chiefs.

The Bishop (1904), being far away (since he was living in Marienberg), did not see clearly in all this: however, he noticed the division between the missionaries.

Year 1905

The bishop comes to make his regular visit... The southern posts (Issavi, Nsasa) talk about a rapprochement with the king. The northern posts are not too keen on this. They feared that the authority of the Batutsi's would expand around them, to the detriment of the civil authority that the missionaries had acquired through their feats of arms...

My lord decided to found Kabgaye... in order to get closer to the king and the chiefs. Kabgaye had all the necessary conditions (Proximity to the capital, 30 kilometers... pasture land... inhabited by numerous Batutsi families... central point in relation to all the stations in Ruanda)... Father Lecoindre was appointed founder... he set up a few huts to make an act of possession, until he could come and occupy them definitively in May 1906 with Father Desbrosses and Brother Fulgence. At the same time, the Bishop succeeded in founding a very modest school in the capital: he left as a teacher a brave "musukuma", Elia Mukono, who knew how to be appreciated by his gentleness, his good manners and his respect for the king and the chiefs. He won us the king's sympathies. Father Lecoindre had been ordered to support this work, which was nevertheless officially entrusted to Father Brard. Issavi could help Elia more, and Father Brard was a man of great experience. Unfortunately, the memory of the Baganda's had remained ineffaceable in the memory of the Batutsi's.

Year 1906

Father Brard came to the Chapter. He was replaced in Issavi by Father Loupias... who adapted to the situation, in spite of some fashionable prejudices in the minds of the confreres of the northern posts.

Kabgaye Foundation: everything is going smoothly. In the various posts, one is surprised to see that this mission, the only one where violence has not been used, is going ahead, slowly it is true, but without making a fuss... There seems to be some support for the Batutsi's cause... The appointment of Father Classe to the post of Issavi with the title of Vicar General for Rwanda, helps this cause. The latter was astonished to note that the king had great authority in Rwanda, that he was not a dog as the friends of the mission in Rwaswa and Nyundo called him. Moreover, Father Classe had to take into account the state of mind of the missionaries at the stations of Nsasa, Issavi and Kabgaye... and to overcome some of his prejudices. Finally, Father Classe is officially in charge of relations with the king... of the maintenance of the school in the capital... and everything that goes with it.

Father Classe must therefore separate himself a little from the way of judging things as it was then done in Rwaswa, Nyundo, Mibirizi (the old anti-Batutsi camp). He separated himself from his former colleagues with whom he had to share the ways of appreciating the politics of the country. This alienated these collaborators... Hence his difficult situation. It continued to be so in the aftermath.

When Father Malet toured with Father Classe in 1907–1908, he found that the latter was not at all liked in certain posts. Father Malet went a little too far and disapproved a little of the vicar general: this only increased the strength of the opposing party. My Lord seemed to be indirectly targeted, because Father Classe was at that moment one with his Grandeur. I can say that Father Malet's visit was a great moral blow to the episcopal authority and increased the division between the missionaries... Some confreres wanted to be seen as knowing the language of the natives best, and were the most capable of composing the books and catechisms to be printed... and then a hundred other small individual dissatisfactions (appointments and others) against the episcopal authority. Father Malet listened too much to all these complaints.

The bishop suffered from this: out of humility, he stepped aside: unfortunately, he was made to feel too much that he was now "too old". It was the misfortune of the mission that his authority was taken away from him. The Bishop, out of sensitivity and to avoid complications, relinquished his authority in favor of his vicar general... Given the background, things could only go from bad to worse: this is what happened.

Moreover, a number of colleagues, especially the superiors, knew how to hide a certain number of events from him, or rather, he was not told about them.

He realized this and from then on his Grandeur was seen to offer himself for service in the posts as a simple missionary. He stayed for some time at the mission of Issavi, then at that of Nyundo. In the latter, where he was at the beginning of the war, he spent a good part of his time in the confessional. He tried to impose his methods on the confreres of Nyundo (Fr. Vekerle [Weckerlé] and Huntziger): at one point he thought he had succeeded: the catechumens were becoming numerous... the Christians were very assiduous in receiving the sacraments. Soon, alas, he learned that everything was based on violence... on Saturdays they even went to their homes to get the reluctant Christians, who were forced with the “chicotte” to go and kneel at the feet of his Grandeur who was waiting for them in the confessional... What a blow for the Bishop when he learned all this!

He then tried to get the Northern Fathers down to the Southern posts, and vice versa... This did not help matters... The missions went through terrible crises... The missionaries who were exchanged found themselves more or less disoriented in their new surroundings.

In 1914, in the month of June, Monseigneur founded the post of “Bushiru” between Nyundo and Rwasu (Irubura).

Father Lecoindre was called as founder. It was undoubtedly a question of preaching rapprochement with the Batutsi's in these regions where they had hardly been listened to until then. Some highlanders wanted Father Lecoindre to be replaced by Father Desbrosses: the latter was very much in line with the ideas of the Bishop and he succeeded perfectly well.

The Bishop, no doubt believing that he had finally won his case, retired to Kabgaye during the war in 1915, I believe. He lives there retired from business it seems. He doesn't seem to want to be involved in the general management anymore. He is unable to do anything detailed because of his bad eyes; and then he says to himself: “No matter how much I wrote and directed, and gave advice... no one wanted to listen to me... it's not now that I'm called ‘the old man’ that I have any chance of being listened to”. His directive on the catechumenate, to give just one example, has become a dead letter in several stations.

IV. Some of the reasons which in the meantime may have accentuated the division:

- 1° The addition of Urundi to Ruanda to form Kivu... Urundi had to follow the methods of Ruanda: this was not without much discussion.
- 2° Numerous changes in personnel even before the war.
- 3° The bad spirit fostered by certain ex-superiors.
- 4° The spirit of denunciation, of criticism of the orders of superiors.
- 5° The lack of submission of some missionaries to the directions given.
- 6° The partiality in the distribution of funds in the various posts of the vicariate.
- 7° The foundation of two seminaries in Kabgaye: because of the shortage of food in this region: each year the transport of food supplies will absorb more than 2,500 francs.
- 8° The lack of discretion of some confreres and also of the Father Vicar General.
- 9° Over-emphasis on human policy.
- 10° Tendency to want to designate certain posts as "model missions" without there being any serious reasons for this.
- 11° Sometimes too much detail in the methods of the apostolate, which leads or can lead to scruples and the ruin of the initiative.
- 12° The methods of the Bishop have often been misunderstood and misinterpreted.
- 13° The method for the various parts of the vicariate has been too standardized. There are unquestionable principles which, when poorly applied in practice, give only mediocre or even bad results.

In my humble opinion, this is still what we need in Kivu:

1. That the Council of the Vicariate ensures that the resources of the Vicariate are distributed impartially and according to the works among the different posts (that it meets more often).
- 2° That there are clearly defined budgets for each work.
3. That there be a general bursar who is familiar with the business and who is aware of the material resources of each station, and that the individual bursars enter in the "Receipts" everything that should be included.
4. That the mission of Kabgaye manages to create the means to maintain the seminarians (in terms of food), the property is large enough. Otherwise, the seminary should be moved.

5. That more attention be given to the formation of catechists with an evangelical spirit: this is totally lacking. It would be good to send a father to study the question in Buganda for a few weeks.
- 6° The superiors do too much detail, they do not remain “leaders” enough. While being captains, they do too much of the job of simple soldiers or corporals. We lack cadres, i.e. well-trained catechists.
- 7° we would be very weak against an invasion of Protestantism: the superiors have not devoted enough time to the formation of serious Christians who will one day help them against this struggle.
- 8° We should react against the natural apathy of certain colleagues.

“Many of these remarks are addressed to me: I confess that I have made many mistakes! May God forgive me and prevent me from falling into them again.

V°. The situation – Some remedies. Desiderata.

A.- Softness:

- a) reaching the rapprochement of the Batutsi's class. This is the party of order. It will be a lot of caution for the stations where their authority is less: but there again it can be done.
- b) Do not appoint as superiors missionaries who are too democratic: beware of the anarchy or Bolshevism that may result.
- c) To train catechists who will only use gentleness: this work needs to be created: most catechists have followed too much the way of their elders (the Baganda's).
- d) Monitor these catechists carefully. Question them at length and in detail: make them account for their actions... very important: this requires patience and a lot of time.
- e) Prevent Christians from being disrespectful to their leaders... never accept as catechumens people who are insubordinate to the authority of the country.
- f) Avoiding large-scale politics on a large scale.
- g) Not to make people practice religion by threats... beatings... fines.

On this subject, the Council of Major Superiors would do well to adopt as its own the famous letter of Father Roussez to the confreres of Kivu, January 1912 or 1911, in which he threatens with suspension ipso facto (in the name of the Monsignor) the confreres who crack down on the natives

B.- Obedience:

- a) To draw up the necessary statutes and have them printed... to oblige the missionaries to comply with them.
- b) Observation of the points mentioned in the circulars as being very important. This brought many colleagues back to uniformity in judgements and acts.
- c) Never slander Major Superiors or misinterpret their actions.

C.- Charity:

- Avoiding detraction.
- Avoid criticism.
- Avoid assessments of this and that mission.
- Estimate each of its colleagues.
- Ecce quam bonum⁵³¹ It strikes the confreres of Kivu when they go to some of the neighbouring vicariates where they taste the advantages of the life of charity.
- Do not peddle from post to post what you know of disadvantages against this colleague; against this other station.
- Put up with everyone's faults: never try to get rid of this or that colleague by describing him or her in an unfavourable light to the major superiors.
- Accept that a superior or colleague will charitably warn you when there is cause for concern.

Rwanda's kings from the 19. to the 21. century

Mutara Rwogera	1830–1860
Kigeri Rwabugiri	1853–1895
Mibambwe IV Rutarindwa	1895–1896
Yuhi V Musinga	1896–1931
Mutara III Rudahigwa	1931–1959
Kigeli IV Ndahindurwa	1959–1961 (died in exile in 2016)

531 "See how good it is" [to live as brothers]: (Ps 132:1).

The Editors and Authors

Klaus Bachmann – political scientist, historian, professor of social sciences at the private Polish SWPS University in Warsaw, concentrates on Transitional Justice, International Criminal Justice and German Colonialism in Africa. He is the author of “Genocidal Empires. German Colonialism in Africa and the Third Reich” (Berlin: Peter Lang 2018).

Prof. Joanna Bar, Ph.D. – political scientist, historian and ethnologist; associate professor at the Institute of the Middle and Far East of the Jagiellonian University, Member of the Polish African Society and the Jagiellonian Centre for African Studies. Her research field centers around the social and political change in East African countries, with a particular focus on contemporary social and political changes in Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi.

Ngege Ransom Tanyu MPA, M.A. – Ph.D. candidate in political science and public administration at the Pedagogical University of Krakow, Founder at Afrca Online & Publications Library. His research border on higher education policy, governance and accountability in higher education, armed conflict, party politics, ethnic conflicts and political history of Africa.

Gerhard Kemp – international and comparative criminal lawyer, professor of Criminal Law at the University of the West of England, Bristol, (previously at the University of Derby) and extraordinary professor of public law at Stellenbosch University. His research centres on international criminal justice, comparative criminal law, and post-conflict studies (including transitional justice). He is the author and editor, most recently, of “Criminal Law in South Africa” (Cape Town: OUP 2022).

Łukasz Majewski, Ph.D. – lawyer, attorney – at law, assistant professor of public law at the private Polish SWPS University in Warsaw, concentrates on International Humanitarian Law of Armed Conflicts, Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure in historical context.

Assumpta Mugiraneza is a Franco-Rwandan academic with degrees in Education Studies (Rwanda), Social Psychology, and Political Science from the Université de Paris VIII. Since 1994 her research has focused on genocide and extreme violence, particularly through discourse analysis, comparing the genocidal discourse of Hutu power to Nazi discourse. Since 2010 she has cofounded

and directed the IIRBA Center for Multimedia Heritage, a center for Rwandan audio- visual archives spanning more than a century, freely accessible to all, at the intersection of academic research and practice. She is the author and co-author of a range of articles on the topics of hate speech and propaganda, the teaching of history, the role of archives in state-building, and the deconstruction of ideologies of hatred.

Father Stefaan Minnaert, of Belgian nationality, was born in Oudenaarde in March 1952. In 1974, he obtained a master's degree in Contemporary History at the University of Gent. After his military service, he worked as an assistant archivist in the archives of his hometown. In 1975, he entered the Society of Missionaries of Africa better known as the Society of the White Fathers. After his formation, he took his missionary oath in 1985. The same year, he was ordained a priest. After his ordination he was sent to Rwanda where he worked in various parishes. In 1998, his Society asked him to produce a brochure to commemorate the centenary of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. This allowed him to visit the Archives of the White Fathers in Rome on several occasions. It was then that he discovered that the history of the evangelization of Rwanda told in the last century did not correspond with the historical documents. To avoid controversy, he chose to publish these documents for the German period refusing to impose his own interpretation. His research was not appreciated by his Rwandan colleagues. From 2006 to 2009 he worked as an archivist for the White Fathers in Rome. In disagreement with his Superiors, his mandate as archivist was not renewed in 2009. Finally he returned to his native country where he joined the diocesan clergy of Gent. Since then he has written several articles and books which show that the version of the evangelization of Rwanda as it is told needs to be revised.

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