

Colonizing Colonizers: On the Colonial Transformation of “Pre-Colonial” Rwanda

Axel T. Paul

ABSTRACTS

Schon bevor Rwanda in den letzten Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts eine deutsche Kolonie wurde, übte das vorkoloniale ruandische Königtum über sein westliches Grenzland seinerseits eine quasi-koloniale Herrschaft aus. Hier entstanden Modelle und Methoden der Herrschaft und Ausbeutung, die unter europäischer Kolonialherrschaft zur Blaupause für Ruandas pseudo-traditionelle Gesellschaftsstruktur wurden. Indes war es der europäische Kolonialismus, der Ruandas vorkolonialen Imperialismus in einen Fall von innerem Kolonialismus transformierte. Der erste Teil des Aufsatzes behandelt die allgemeinen Gründe für die Entstehung von Staatlichkeit in Afrika des Zwischenseengebiets. Der zweite Teil beschäftigt sich mit dem Aufstieg und der inneren Dynamik des ruandischen Reiches von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Ankunft europäischer Eroberer. Der letzte Teil schließlich skizziert, inwieweit es die europäische Präsenz in Ruanda der ruandischen Monarchie ermöglichte, nicht nur zu überleben, sondern ihren Anspruch auf souveräne Herrschaft faktisch zu untermauern.

Even before Rwanda became a German colony in the final years of the nineteenth century, the pre-colonial Rwandan kingdom ruled over western frontier territories which had already acquired a quasi-colonial status. Here, models and methods of domination and exploitation were developed that, under European colonial rule, came to serve as the blueprint for Rwanda's pseudo-traditional socio-political structure. Yet, it was European colonialism which transformed Rwanda's pre-colonial imperialism into a case of internal colonialism. The first part of the paper deals with general reasons for the development of statehood in interlacustrine Africa. The second part focuses on the rise and inner dynamics of the Rwandan empire from the mid-eighteenth century until the arrival of the European conquerors. The last part outlines to what extent the European presence in Rwanda enabled the Rwandan monarchy not only to survive, but to live up to its pretension to be the sovereign ruler of the country.

In October 1996, the former president of Rwanda Pasteur Bizimungu gave a speech to the diplomatic corps in his country, in which he declared that at least parts of the Congolese Kivu provinces, namely the regions settled by Kinyarwanda-speaking Banyamulenge, historically belonged to the “ancient nation of Rwanda”. These regions, supposedly part of the Rwandan state since the sixteenth century, had been cut off, he maintained, only by colonial, i.e. European, decision.¹ The background to his speech was the incipient First Congo War, in which Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed rebels from eastern Congo, first and foremost the Banyamulenge, rose up to resist discriminatory pressures from the Congolese central government in Kinshasa and to eventually overthrow the Mubutu regime.² Bizimungu held that Rwanda did not lay claim to any pre-colonial Rwandan territory; his government, however, not only supported – and probably even directed – the Banyamulenge uprising, but Rwandan troops also invaded Congo to seek out and destroy militias composed of Rwandan Hutu *génocidaires*, who, after their defeat in July 1994, had fled westwards into the countryside, where they regrouped and now threatened to hit back.

In the Rwandan genocide of 1994, between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi were killed by Hutu militias, the police, the army, and ordinary civilians. Whereas many early media reports “explained” the genocide with recourse to ancient ethnic hatred between the two groups, there can be no doubt that the genocide was not a spontaneous outbreak of ingrained rancour, but, on the contrary, well planned, prepared, and consciously set in motion by the political rulers of the day.³ It was their desperate attempt to ward off military defeat by the invading Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front.

Strictly speaking, Hutu and Tutsi are, or at least initially were, not different ethnic groups. They speak the same language, have a common history and cultural background, and they inhabit the same region. It was a European, colonial invention to see and treat them as two different tribes or even races, with different geographical and biological genealogies.⁴ Nevertheless, neither the distinction as such, nor its fundamental character, are the outcome of European machinations, whether conscious or unconscious. When Europeans first penetrated the area of what is now Rwanda in the 1890s, they encountered a society that was already split into a ruling, cattle-raising Tutsi minority and a subdued Hutu peasantry. Tutsi and Hutu were primarily political and, at the same time, socio-economic categories, indicating high or low status, wealth or precariousness, and above all power or impotence. The ruling, tribute levying, aristocratic class consisted of Tutsi herders, whereas the bulk of assessable peasantry was considered to be – and increasingly regarded itself – as Hutu. The European assumption that all Tutsi were rulers

1 Quoted from D. Newbury, *Irredentist Rwanda: Ethnic and Territorial Frontiers in Central Africa*, in: *Africa Today* 44 (1997) 2, pp. 211–221, on p. 215.

2 See G. Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*, Oxford 2009.

3 See S. Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*, Ithaca 2006.

4 See J.-P. Chrétien, *Hutu et Tutsi au Rwanda et au Burundi*, in: J.-L. Amselle / E. M'Bokolo (eds.), *Au Cœur de l'ethnie: Ethnies, tribalisme et état en Afrique*, Paris 1985, pp. 129–165.

was, however, wrong. In fact, there was a considerable number of poor, farming, and non-ruling Tutsi, just as there were some wealthy, cattle-owning, and, at least formerly, politically influential Hutu families. But in the late nineteenth century, to be part of the aristocracy meant to be – or to have become – Tutsi; on the other hand, to be personally dependent on those who were not kin, dutiable, and obliged to work for members of the aristocracy or "state officials" had become a kind of class fate for the Hutu. Even if being Hutu did not yet signify belonging to a tribe of servants, the term was used to designate the servile status of a person.

This pronounced class distinction was fully developed under King Rwabugiri, who ruled Rwanda when the first Europeans entered his realm.⁵ But as much as they erred when they considered the Hutu to be of a different race, they also erred when they deemed Rwabugiri, and the Rwandan kings in general, to be unopposed, that is, monarchs who were as autocratic as they were legitimate, and who ruled over a politically and territorially uniform state with a culturally homogenous, though socially stratified or even racially segregated population.

As one might imagine, there were seldom clear-cut, continuous borders encircling the kingdom, although these existed in areas where Rwanda faced other polities that were equally well integrated on the political level, or where rivers, marshes, and other natural barriers limited any further encroachment. In the main, and most notably in the west, Rwanda was surrounded by frontiers, by peripheral territories, which were already touched by central Rwandan influence or even power, but which still did not effectively belong to the kingdom, inasmuch as their inhabitants were able to withdraw from, or even subvert, economic and political demands, as well as the cultural claims of the royal court, its ministers, and its henchmen. Rwanda, at least from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, was an imperial power that continuously and successfully extended its reach far beyond its original core in Nduga, a region south of the Nyabarongo bend.⁶

Notwithstanding areas that were only formally subjected, or rather older polities within the realm, King Rwabugiri extended his claim to power even beyond the borders of modern Rwanda. Yet, his campaigns did not reach as far as the Itombwe mountains, northwest of Lake Tanganyika, a region to which the "Rwandan" Banyamulenge, mentioned earlier, had previously fled from Rwandan warfare, but he definitely fought to the west of Lake Kivu.⁷ Other outer frontier areas, like Kinyaga, situated between the south-eastern shores of Lake Kivu and the Nile-Congo watershed, which runs some fifteen kilometres farther eastwards parallel to the lake, had, however, acquired a quasi-colonial

5 See J. Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*, Madison 2004, pp. 36–38, 75, 134–139. This book is the authoritative history of the pre-colonial Rwandan state.

6 For a general statement on the relatedness of the evolution of states and imperialism see K. Ekholm/J. Friedman, "Capital" Imperialism and Exploitation in Ancient World-Systems, in: *Review 6* (1982) 1, pp. 87–109.

7 See D. Newbury, *Les Campagnes de Rwabugiri: Chronologie et bibliographie*, in: *Cahiers d'études africaines* 14 (1974) 53, pp. 181–191.

status even before the Germans made Rwanda their colony in 1897.⁸ It was here, at the Rwandan frontier, where models and methods of domination and exploitation were developed that later, under European colonial rule, became the blueprint for Rwanda's neo- or pseudo-traditional socio-political structure, which classical texts of functionalist anthropology depicted as age-old.⁹ Moreover, it was European colonialism which turned not only Rwanda's pre-colonial peripheries and enclaves into Rwandan state territory, but which helped to transform Rwanda's pre-colonial imperialism into a case of "internal colonialism", meaning that a not only politically but supposedly also ethnically or culturally superior minority ruled over a second-class majority, while inhabiting the same territory.¹⁰ This, at least, is the argument that I will develop in three steps.

The first part of this paper will deal with the general reasons for the development of statehood in interlacustrine Africa. The second part will focus on the rise and inner dynamics of the Rwandan empire from the mid-eighteenth century until the reign of Rwabugiri. In the last part, I will outline the way in which the European presence in Rwanda enabled the Rwandan monarchy not only to survive, but to live up to its pretension to be the sovereign ruler of the country.

I.

Around 1000 CE, the Bantu expansion from northwest sub-Saharan Africa south-eastwards to the Indian Ocean had reached east Africa, including the vast highland plateaus around Lake Victoria.¹¹ Pottery and iron metallurgy were practised, as were cattle-breeding and the cultivation of grain. Farmers and herders lived alongside each other. The east African highlands between the central African rain forest and the far eastern savannahs and coastal areas are a climatically favoured region. Their altitude lies continuously more than 1,000 meters above sea level, which makes their climate perceptibly cooler than that of the savannahs. The absence of large forests east of the Nile-Congo divide indicates that there is less precipitation than in central Africa proper, but the annual rainfall, mainly during two rain seasons of up to 1,000 mm or more, is sufficient to maintain intensive farming, leaving enough pasture for cattle grazing aside. As far as linguistic, archaeological, botanical, and zoological data show, there were no major trans-continental

8 See C. Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*, New York 1988, pp. 23–70.

9 See J.-J. Maquet, *Le Système des relations sociales dans le Ruanda ancien*, Tervuren 1954.

10 The best treatment of the usefulness and validity of the concept of internal colonialism is D. Schorkowitz, *The Shifting Forms of Continental Colonialism: An Introduction*, in: id./J.R. Chávez/I.W. Schröder (eds.), *Shifting Forms of Continental Colonialism: Unfinished Struggles and Tensions*, Singapore 2019, pp. 23–68, on pp. 35sq., 42–52.

11 An excellent overview of the regional developments this paper deals with is given by D. Newbury, *Precolonial Burundi and Rwanda: Local Loyalties, Regional Royalties*, in: *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34 (2000) 2, pp. 255–314; for this section, see moreover J.-P. Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*, New York 2003, pp. 85–137.

migrations after 1000 CE that might substantiate the "Hamitic hypothesis", according to which culturally and politically advanced, African herding tribes, originally from the northeast and only subsequently "blackened", conquered and civilized "inferior", indigenous, "properly" African farming peoples.¹² There has been, however, a geographically minor migration of Luo-speaking and thus, in fact, "north-eastern" tribes, who in the late fifteenth century seized Bunyoro in modern day western Uganda and founded the Babito dynasty. The expansionist drive of Babito-Bunyoro was responsible for the spreading of militarized, politically centralizing polities in the intralacustrine region, and thus indirectly for the later rise of Rwanda.¹³ Yet, it was not, in the first instance, migrations, but internal developments – albeit apparently caused by the climate¹⁴ – in the societies of the east African plateau, which explain their successive transformation from rather egalitarian to more stratified or "conical" forms of political organisations.¹⁵

Before these processes set in – and for many communities even long after and, in some cases, well into the European colonial era – the pseudo- or trans-familial clan was the predominant form of social association. The exogamic clan not only encompassed factual kin, but different families or lineages that were organized and "ruled", as if they were a large family. Farming clans owned their land collectively, "because" their ancestors had once cleared the territory. The fields were nevertheless cultivated along family lines, and it was one of the two main duties of clan heads to supervise and, if need be, rearrange the partitioning of the land. A clan head did this in close consultation with other lineage elders, among whom he was only the first. His second important task was to conduct the fertility rites, in which he was once again aided by his peers. The cattle-raising clans were not really organized differently, except insofar as, due to their semi-nomadic lifestyles, their territorial claims were less stable, and their male members militarily more experienced. The favourable conditions of the plateaus allowed these communities to prosper, not least by nourishing a growing population. On the other hand, cyclical or enduring climatic shifts, especially from the seventeenth century onwards, which culminated in recurring droughts and famines, forced the clan societies to simultaneously move west and "upwards" towards higher, still rainier, and more fertile areas.

These ecological conditions put heavy strain on the affected communities and led to various conflicts, both within and between them.¹⁶ First, the lands on the eastern slopes

12 See E. R. Sanders, *The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective*, in: *Journal of African History* 10 (1969) 4, pp. 521–532.

13 Chrétien, *Great Lakes*, pp. 101sq., 147sq.

14 With regard to Buganda, see C. P. Kottak, *Ecological Variables in the Origin and Evolution of African States: The Buganda Example*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (1972) 3, pp. 351–380; P. Robertshaw/D. Taylor, *Climate Change and the Rise of Political Complexity in Western Uganda*, in: *Journal of African History* 41 (2000) 1, pp. 1–28.

15 On the concept of the "conical clan-state" see S. Breuer, *Der Staat: Entstehung, Typen, Organisationsstadien*, Reinbek 1998, pp. 41–45.

16 The following argument is essentially based on E. J. Steinhart, *Herders and Farmers: The Tributary Mode of Production in Western Uganda*, in: D. Crummey/C. C. Stewart (eds.), *Modes of Production in Africa: The Precolonial Era*, Beverly Hills 1981, pp. 115–155; and Chrétien, *Great Lakes*, pp. 142–145.

of the Nile-Congo crest were not empty. Foraging and horticultural tribes lived in the then still forested areas, which were subsequently cleared. It goes without saying that the ensuing quarrels could not always be resolved peacefully. Second, the farmers who arrived first claimed the newly opened-up fields as theirs. Latecomers often had to acknowledge the property rights of their predecessors and to ask for a kind of land lease. Moreover, quite often it was not whole clans that migrated, but single families. Thus, in the “colony”, i.e., the new western settlement, the egalitarian, balanced relationships between the families of a single clan could give way to – at least economically – asymmetrical, lopsided relationships between families of different clans. Similar developments will have occurred in the ancestral territories too, where population pressure and migration made the redistribution of cultivation rights necessary. Third, farmers and herders, on the plateaus, as well as both along and upon the successively developed slopes, had to find ways of switching from a complementary to an integrated and intensified form of production. In principle, at least, it is more productive to manure fields by selectively grazing cattle, instead of letting them lay fallow for a season, and thereby to have two instead only one harvest a year. Likewise, a mixed food base, containing milk and meat, as well as vegetarian dishes, is more nutritious than a diet deriving exclusively from herding or farming. In order to realize such benefits, however, solutions have to be found and enforced, for example, concerning whom is allowed to use, or even merely cross, which stretch of land at what time of the year. Moreover, new forms of exchange and interaction between famers and herders had to be institutionalized.

In such a situation, where the clan organisation of society comes under strain or even disintegrates, where imbalances in material wealth increase, where new property claims arise, where collective interests clash and disputes escalate into violent conflicts, authoritative arbiters or political leaders are likely to step forward and, ultimately, to be accepted. It was the opposing trends, on the one hand, of population growth thanks to generally favourable conditions and, on the other hand, recurring economic crises due to climatic or ecological shocks that enabled the establishment of political authorities, who were capable not only of mediating, but of deciding and resolving conflicts in which they themselves were not directly involved.

The new African “kings” were first of all judges. They inherited this role from the clan heads. But because they were no longer assumed to be akin to their “subjects”, they could not only arbitrate among equals but also claim to decide collective affairs. To be sure, in historical reality the differences between a clan leader and a king might have been blurred. There will have been mighty clan chiefs as well as only “titular” kings. Kingdoms or “the state” do not arrive on earth like a meteorite. The first kings were as dependent on the consent of the lineage or family heads above which they formally stood as earlier clan leaders had been. They relied on their advice, since they needed their support in order to carry out the fertility rites. But they nevertheless represented a new – in this case political – social type, since they not only bear a title – in Kinyarwanda *mwami* –

but are also supposed to have come from elsewhere,¹⁷ that is, to not be of the same kin, precisely because this enabled them to succeed in resolving the social and also natural crisis that the founding myths regularly imagine the community to have been trapped in. That they are believed to be of a different "breed" is further indicated by the fact that they are often allowed or even obliged to practice homosexuality and incest.¹⁸ Like their clan predecessors, they importantly reenacted the return of order and fertility, but, in addition to these, they also functioned as a medium for transcendental powers, i.e., even if they are no gods, they are as close to them as they are to men.¹⁹ It is this special status, this new religious legitimization that indicates that the kings usurped and acted on enhanced prerogatives.

But it was not only the kings that tilted the former balance. It was also the herders as a group who became socio-economically, and thereby politically, more dominant. The reason for this is simple and, in the last instance, also related to the ecologically enforced increase in productivity. In search of better weather conditions, both farmers and herders had to move westwards. Herders, however, are fundamentally more mobile than farmers. It is much easier to abandon grazing grounds than tilled fields. This does not imply that herders necessarily arrived earlier in the west than farmers, but it does mean that herders had a structural advantage when it came to moving on, and thereby to avoiding or at least postponing disasters. Additionally, semi-nomadic herders, who often tend to raid cattle, as well as to raise it, are militarily superior to stationary farmers. Their way of living regularly involves fighting, or at least violent skirmishes, and, in turn, allows them to flee imminent dangers much more swiftly than sedentary lifestyles do.

Moreover, their "capital" is mobile too. Even in dire straits, it is not inevitably destroyed. It is most likely that this "capital advantage", plus the greater susceptibility of intensified agriculture to natural or social disruptions, account for the cultural upgrading of the cow.²⁰ For herders and farmers alike the cow became the most prestigious "social currency", which had to be paid out in matrimonial transactions or for penal compensation, and which not only embodied wealth, but symbolized status too. (Even today, in Rwanda and Burundi, "you are as beautiful as a cow" is a valid compliment from a lover for his beloved.) Owning and, moreover, being able to give a cow signified economic security and social respectability. Obtaining a cow, on the other hand, signified benevolence and protection on part of the donor, but also decisively imposed the constraint to be grateful and even dependent on the part of the recipient. One has to keep in mind

17 See L. de Heusch, *The King Comes from Elsewhere*, in: A. Jacobson-Widding (ed.), *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, Uppsala 1991, pp. 109–117.

18 On this point, see in a comparative perspective E. Sagan, *At the Dawn of Tyranny: The Origins of Individualism, Political Oppression, and the State*, New York 1985, chap. 19.

19 For Breuer, Staat, p. 39, this switch in affiliation is the decisive criterion for distinguishing chiefdoms from states.

20 Chrétien, *Great Lakes*, pp. 184–187; more generally P. Bonte, "To Increase Cows, God Created the King": The Function of Cattle in Interlacustrine Societies, in: J.G. Galaty/P. Bonte (eds.), *Herders, Warriors and Traders: Pastoralism in Africa*, Boulder 1991, pp. 62–86; J.-N. Nkurikiyimfura, *Le gros bétail et la société rwandaise: Evolution historique des XII^e–XIV^e siècles à 1958*, Paris 1994, pp. 44–73, 102–119.

that there existed no markets, where everyday goods or food were traded.²¹ Exchange did take place, but it was the rules of reciprocity, and not the bargaining involved in barter, by which the game was played. To give generously, especially to give a cow, did not mean to be charitable and altruistic; it meant to upgrade one's status, to accumulate, *nota bene*, spendable capital and to "buy" loyalty.²²

And it seems, as if Ruganzu Ndori, the founder of the Rwandan kingdom, or rather its ruling Nyiginya dynasty, a historically attested figure of the late seventeenth century, in invading Rwanda's central region Nduga from the north, owed his victories over local lords as much to his wealth in cattle, as to his military genius and the fighting prowess of his warriors.²³ By accepting his gifts of cattle, they gave up their autonomy and became his dependents, without, however, giving up their factual authority over their people.

II.

Throughout the interlacustrine region kingdoms sprung up. Yet, not every corner of the area became part of such an "early state".²⁴ Rather, a multiplicity of smaller and greater polities – some of the smaller ones still organized on the basis of clans, some under the leadership of primarily ritualistic chiefs, some of the greater ones already under the sway of kings – existed alongside each other. Their relationships were partly peaceful, partly bellicose; there existed tributary ties between less and more powerful polities as well as "diplomatic" and matrimonial exchanges between "equals". One entity, however, the aforementioned Bunyoro kingdom under the Babito dynasty became particularly powerful and vast. Already in the sixteenth century, the Bunyoro campaigns touched the territory of modern-day Rwanda and later even crossed the Kagera, which currently separates north-eastern Rwanda and southern Uganda from Tanzania. These campaigns, as with most of the wars that were fought from the seventeenth century onwards by all of the mightier kingdoms of the highlands, did not primarily, if at all, aim at conquering foreign lands and enlarging the territory of the realms, but at raiding and bringing booty back home. Nevertheless, Bunyoro became a large kingdom – in fact, the largest in the region – whose power and military range sufficed to intimidate its neighbours and force those who wanted to remain independent to rearm too.

Thus it was not the climate alone that led the communities of interlacustrine Africa on the path to statehood. Once some of them started to organize politically, others had to follow or to risk soon being overwhelmed. The fact that, in the nineteenth century,

21 See, though for the commercial networks of nineteenth century, Chrétien, *Great Lakes*, pp. 191–199.

22 With regard to Burundi, see A. A. Trouwborst, *L'organisation politique en tant que système d'échange au Burundi*, in: *Anthropologica* 3 (1961) 1, pp. 65–81.

23 Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 46–48; for a general statement, see H. Hess, *Die Entstehung zentraler Herrschaftsinstanzen durch die Bildung Klientelärer Gefolgschaft: Zur Diskussion um die Entstehung staatlich organisierter Gesellschaften*, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 29 (1977) 4, pp. 762–778.

24 On the concept see H. J. M. Claessen/P. Skalnik, *The Early State: Models and Reality*, in: id. (eds.), *The Early State*, The Hague 1978, pp. 637–650.

Buganda, Rwanda, and Burundi had become the most powerful kingdoms in the area was the contingent outcome of two hundred years of interregional warfare. Yet, contrary to the dynastic myths of the Rwandan court and its later and first historiographer Alexis Kagame the Rwandan kingdom did not exist prior to the seventeenth century.²⁵ Rather, its founder Ruganzu Ndori and his men probably fled from the campaigns of Bunyoro. They nonetheless emulated some of its policies, which meant, on the one hand, raiding and plundering weaker communities and polities and, on the other hand, making them dependent and even tributary through the "power of the cow".

Ndori not only conquered Nduga and instituted the Nyiginya dynasty, probably by deposing legitimate former lords. He also, and more importantly, laid the foundation of the Rwandan state by forming a Rwandan army. One might even say that with and since Ndori, the army became the state. For his campaigns and also the control of the realm he did not rely any longer on the temporary recruitment of herders or farmers, but on standing, regularly trained troops, who were ideally recruited as children or youths already. Upon accession to power, Ndori's immediate successors still dissolved existing armies and constituted new ones. But, especially for this reason, the warriors were personally loyal to the reigning king. They owed their privileged status and thus obedience to him, not to their families, lineages, or clans. Moreover, Ndori divided his troops into separate armies and granted them land, which they could exploit. Likewise, he compartmentalized the kingdom into provinces, which were overseen by provincial chiefs. These were in charge of collecting tributes and foodstuffs, as well as prestige goods, from the local population and of sending them to court.²⁶

The whole eighteenth century was characterized by an ongoing militarisation, a continuous expansion of the realm, and the increasing prominence and power of the central court.²⁷ These processes reinforced one another. The growing army procured rich booty and territorial gains, the spoils of war enriched the court, and an enlarged realm necessitated enhanced control and an invigorated administration.²⁸ By the end of the century, the Rwandan army encompassed approximately 12,000 men, who were, since the time of King Rujugira (c. 1770–1786), also stationed all over the country, especially in places where Rwanda bordered other powerful kingdoms, like Burundi in the south or Gisaka in the east. Moreover, when not in combat, the military needed to be supplied; at first it was special corporate groups, the so-called "social armies", and later the ordinary peasantry that had to shoulder this burden. The king also claimed the right to distribute land

25 See A. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire du Rwanda*, 2 vols, Butare 1972 and 1975; on Kagame, who, on the one hand, belonged to the Rwandan Tutsi high nobility and, on the other, became one of the first ordained Rwandan priests and leading intellectuals, see C. Vidal, *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire*, Paris 1991, pp. 62–83.

26 See Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 58–65.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

28 Thus, rather unsurprisingly, corroborating the logic of the "extraction-coercion cycle" in a non-European context, too (see S. E. Finer, *State- and Nation-Building in Europe: The Role of the Military*, in: Ch. Tilly [ed.], *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton 1975, pp. 84–163).

to his troops, thereby circumventing, if not abolishing, the traditional prerogative of the clan heads to do so.²⁹

And he bound his staff, his provincial, and army chiefs to him, mainly through so called *ubuhake* “contracts”, which were cattle-based and clientelistic.³⁰ These arose when a richer and more powerful cattle-raising patron gave a cow to a lower client – in the beginning a herder who was already an influential man too – in return for which the latter owed regular “gifts” and services to the former. In principle, at least, the client for his part thus obtained the protection of the patron, of which the cow was the symbol. The “material” price that the client had to pay over and above the tributes he sent to his patron was, however, the “formal” renunciation of his property rights over all his cattle, should the patron be in need of it to restock his herds. These *ubuhake* ties could be interlaced so that client B of patron A could be patron B of client C and so forth. First and foremost, through the establishment and deployment of armies, but also through the delegation of power to civil administrators, the Rwandan kings managed to place themselves at the pinnacle of the *ubuhake* pyramid and to claim to be not only the proprietor of the whole land, but also of all Rwandan herds. Yet, the kings were not almighty. They could not dispose of the military aristocracy, which rose to power and prosperity in the same way as the kings themselves.

In principle, the aristocracy and the administration of the realm were one and the same thing. Both had military roots or were still involved either in warfare or in organizing the supply of troops. Officially, they were in charge of executing the king’s orders, creaming off much of the agricultural surplus, and purveying it to the court. Nevertheless, they were able and even allowed to keep a considerable portion of the tributes and corvée for themselves. In practice, they led their armies and ruled their provinces rather autocratically.

On the other hand, the perpetually ambulant king’s court had become the centre of the polity, where one needed and wanted to be, if one had political ambitions. It was here that the wealth of the country literally accumulated, where local and also “foreign” prestige goods, like jewellery from west of Lake Kivu or glass beads, cowry shells, pieces of copper and brass, and even cotton from the Indian ocean were held and displayed. The court was supplied with filled stocks of cereals, tubers, and legumes, as well as large cattle enclosures. There were specialist hand workers for the construction of huts, the weaving of fabrics, baskets, and mats, forgers, and tool and weapon makers. The court housed not only the king, the influential “king mother” (who was not the biological mother of the king, but one of his wives, who had been chosen to take care of the heir of the throne), (one of) his spouses, and his personal entourage, but also the ritual advisers and their families. And the court was the place where the king properly held court, where he met and instructed his ministers, where political decisions were taken, where he received delegations, and where he dispensed justice. All of this was reason enough for the land-

29 See Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 68–73.

30 On *ubuhake*, see Maquet, *Système*, pp. 151–154; C. Newbury, *Cohesion*, pp. 75sq., 133sq.; Nkurikiyimfura, *Gros bétail*, pp. 119–140; Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 47sq.

based aristocrats to regularly visit the court. Whoever wanted to know and, moreover, influence what was going on had to be close to the king. But like many of their colleagues in other parts of the world, the kings also demanded that his lords send him their sons to let them be militarily trained and taught "Rwandan" culture, i.e., court etiquette and history, but, in practice, he kept as them as hostages too.³¹

But, again, neither in the eighteenth nor in the nineteenth century were the kings the undisputed rulers of their realm. There remained insubordinate aristocrats and repeated violent succession struggles and coups. Yet, kingship as such had become strong enough to have become the trophy which even, and especially, the most ambitious families were vying for. In fact, it is the shifting power balance between the king and the aristocracy in combination with the competition between powerful aristocratic families and factions that explains the remarkable territorial expansion of the kingdom and also the intensified exploitation of its subaltern population.³²

One of the main instruments used to extend one's influence, by the king, as well as by his officials and subordinates, were cows in general and *ubuhake* ties in particular. Much easier than breeding them, however, was stealing them from beyond the "borders" of the realm. Sometimes these incursions entered into territories that were politically not yet as integrated and centralized as Rwanda, if they were in any sense. Sometimes they entered neighbouring kingdoms that were similarly organized and able to offer organized resistance. The former situation applies first of all to the western regions beyond the Nile-Congo divide, the latter to the eastern borderlands. Here, in the east, the campaigns came closer to a war proper between two opposing armed groups or polities, while, in the west, raids predominated.³³ The kings were engaged in both, but raids were undertaken on the "private" initiative of field commanders and provincial office holders too.

In the main, Rwanda's imperialistic behaviour has to be explained with recourse to this inner dynamic of enhanced elite competition, and, secondarily, by its successful self-assertion against external competitors. A preceding imperialistic "mission", a civilisational ideal or even ideology which should be spread to "other people", or more simply a "secular" grand design that has consciously been laid out in advance and subsequently pursued by the court cannot be identified. Between the east and the west, however, there was a rather tragic dialectic at work, through which the victims of Rwandan warfare became the spearhead of Rwandan colonization.

Two states against which Rwanda intermittently fought for decades were Ndorwa in the northeast and Gisaka in the east. The first was eventually defeated in the eighteenth century, yet, the second more or less successfully managed to preserve its independence vis-à-vis Rwanda well into the era of European colonialism. But the devastation wrought in both theatres of war were horrible and lasting, making settlement, farming, and even herding in the afflicted areas a hard, if not impossible, business. Thus, starting with the

31 See *ibid.*, pp. 79–90; more generally Chrétien, *Great Lakes*, pp. 166–170.

32 Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 96sq., 129.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 153–162.

campaigns of Rujugira in the eighteenth century, Tutsi herders from Ndorwa and Gisaka began to flee westwards through central Rwanda. They climbed and crossed the western mountain range and settled in Kinyaga and Bugoyi, along the eastern shores of Lake Kivu, and, even further west, amongst a culturally heterogeneous and politically still disunited population. Here, however, they were perceived and eventually also behaved as Rwandan settlers who had and who developed cultural and political ties to the centre. On the one hand, they actually despised the food (or its preparation), the language (or its pronunciation), and the allegedly boorish manners of locals, as well as their lack of epic poems. On the other hand, either they were already affiliated with other Tutsi patrons in Nduga, or they were actively looking for their protection. To the extent that the relationships between the “refugees” and central Rwandan strongmen developed, the court and its stewards also seized the opportunity, offered assistance, sent cows, established ties, and eventually named or even installed officials.³⁴

The result was not only the incremental annexation and political integration of the peripheral “colonies” into the realm, but also a growing social stratification between “foreign” Tutsi lords and a second-class indigenous population. Thus, even if there was no explicit colonial project, a situation with colonial traits slowly evolved in the western periphery of the Rwandan kingdom, insofar as a power differential between a foreign minority and a local majority consolidated and an effective, although not necessarily intentional, “Rwandization” of the local culture took place. In contradistinction from a typical “colonial situation”, however, the peripheral or “colonial” territories were not governed differently from the centre.³⁵ The court instead tried to extend its influence. Yet, it was here, at the frontier, that Rwandan government structures first evolved into what later became to be seen, at least in the eyes of many European colonialists and a good number of mid-twentieth century anthropologists too, as the traditional “premise of inequality”.³⁶ It was here where the subordination of the local, culturally supposedly inferior peasant population by and to central and even east Rwandan herders became an ethnicized hierarchy that radiated back into the core regions of the realm. Eventually, the incorporation of the colonial frontier resulted in an inner Rwandan colonialism, namely an also and not least culturally legitimized rule of a distinctive Tutsi aristocracy over a majority of mainly Hutu peasants.

Another but related outcome of the infighting between the king and aristocracy was the intensification of state power as such and, by implication, of the exploitation of the ordinary population.³⁷ An officeholder was obliged to assure the mobilisation of war-

34 See D. Newbury, “Bunyabungo”: The Western Rwanda Frontier, c. 1750–1850, in: I. Kopytoff (ed.), *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*, Bloomington 1987, pp. 162–192; C. Newbury, *Cohesion*, pp. 22–37; Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 120sq.

35 See G. Balandier, *La situation coloniale: approche théorique*, in: *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 11 (1951), pp. 44–79.

36 “The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda” (A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom, Oxford 1961) is the title of the English translation of J.-J. Maquet’s representative study “Le système des relations sociales dans le Ruanda ancien.”

37 Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 126–133, 162sq.; generally, C. Newbury, *Cohesion*; a condensed version of the book’s

riors for the king's armies and to exact tributes for the court, while, at the same time, being, if not formally, then at least factually, entitled to enrich himself. The ruler's glory gleamed on his delegates too. Thus, the struggle for a commanding post in the army or the provincial administration was as fierce as the competition for cows. Both offices and cows were at once prestige goods and a non-, or at least not so, violent instrument for amassing wealth. But since the number of aristocratic aspirants for honourable and rewarding posts was higher than the number of offices, it was a "solution" that, during the nineteenth century, was widely taken advantage of, to increase their number and to diversify the tasks and competences of their incumbents.

One should not overestimate the formality and coherence of the administrative system, but there are, nonetheless, hierarchical levels and specific functions that can be distinguished. We mentioned already the provincial and the army chiefs. Both types of functionaries were appointed by the king and could be found throughout the core region, with the army chiefs being installed also in and along contested border zones. In the nineteenth century, two more offices below that of province chief were established: that of the district land chief and of the district cattle chief. Their holder's tasks consisted in levying material dues, recruiting manual labour for work on royal and official estates, and arbitrating "civil" conflicts, often over land rights. Even if they were not sent from outside, but appointed locally, they nonetheless depended on the court and were not obligated to legitimize their actions and decisions vis-à-vis the local population. Notwithstanding occasional epidemics and famines, there was steady demographic growth in the heartland, as well as a continuous trickle of westward migration undertaken by parts of the peasantry into the still less populous and more fertile areas along Lake Kivu. This movement, frequently by single families rather than whole lineages, had the effect that the land chiefs, on the one hand, could redistribute vacant fields – or keep them for themselves – and, on the other hand, were obliged to carve out plots for arriving migrants, through which the latter became their clients. Political relationships thus substituted for familial ones, the individual calculation of benefits for the collective balancing of risks and odds.

Three further institutional innovations from the second half of the nineteenth century exacerbated the socio-economic inequality. The first was the introduction of reserved herding domains by means of which the king rewarded deserving warriors, devoted followers, and other favourites.³⁸ These were pastures over which the endowed had exclusive rights of utilisation. Even minor herders had to fear being evicted from their grounds, which aggravated land scarcity and triggered migration. The second administrative novelty was that the provincial chiefs, whose position had been weakened by the installation of the land and cattle chiefs, appointed, at a third level, hill chiefs.³⁹ Often, these

argument can be found in C. Newbury, *Ethnicity in Rwanda: The Case of Kinyaga*, in: *Africa* 48 (1978) 1, pp. 17–29.

38 Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 131–133.

39 C. Newbury, *Cohesion*, pp. 108, 113sq., 132sq.

were not local residents, in addition to being personal clients of their superiors. They interfered in the everyday life of the populace and effectively boosted its “tax” burden. The third innovation was the introduction of *uburetwa*, a corvée of up to a half of the total working time for the provincial chiefs, which, moreover, was explicitly imposed on “Hutu”, i.e. non-Tutsi, peasants alone.⁴⁰ Even if it is difficult to quantify the total amount of labour and agricultural surplus that went to “the state”, or rather its functionaries, there can be no doubt that large parts of the population were severely exploited by their Tutsi lords even before the Europeans appeared on the scene. The emergence of a landless class of day labourers hiring themselves out to whomever gave them food speaks for itself.⁴¹ The at least relative impoverishment of the majority of the population did not, however, prevent *uburetwa* from splitting the mass of subalterns themselves into a majority Hutu class of underdogs and a minority of less-disadvantaged Tutsi.

Yet, these profound socio-structural changes did not take place because the ruling class had a clear intention to intensify the exploitation of the population. Rather, rifts in the ruling class and the fierce, excessively violent struggle of King Rwabugiri, who reigned from 1867 to 1895, to liberate kingship from the restraining influence of mighty aristocratic clans had the effect of decomposing the “ordinary people” too, of dissolving their traditional social units and bonds and creating new “ethnic” blocks of society. The picture that has been, and obviously must be, drawn of the last decades of nineteenth century Rwanda is one of a horrible, extremely bloody civil war.⁴² Moreover, the situation was aggravated in the early 1890s by the double blow, first of a rinderpest that killed up to 90 per cent of the cattle and secondly a smallpox epidemic that raged among the population.⁴³ Rwabugiri reacted to the loss of his herds by the reckless requisitioning of surviving cattle from his clients, as well as other herders, great and small. The *ubuhake* patrons among them were eager to make their damages good by collecting the livestock of their dependents. The result was not only an overthrow of the agrarian ownership structure, but also a severe food crisis. It cannot really come as a surprise, then, that there were a number of Hutu revolts against the Tutsi domination in the south and in the north, which were eventually quelled, and widespread millenarian expectations of a returning survivor king in the east.⁴⁴ Even some of the first Europeans who entered the area at around the same time were welcomed as redeemers, most spectacularly probably the Austrian geographer Oscar Baumann.⁴⁵

40 Ibid., pp. 140–142; Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 134–136.

41 Ibid., p. 130.

42 See *ibid.*, pp. 180–195.

43 See C. Newbury, *Cohesion*, pp. 118sq.; Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 175sq.

44 See *ibid.*, pp. 136–138.

45 See O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle: Reisen und Forschungen der Massai-Expedition des deutschen Antisklaverei-Komitee [sic] in den Jahren 1891–1893*, Berlin 1894, pp. 78–88.

III.

There can be no doubt that European colonialism in Rwanda did not alleviate the living conditions of the indigenous population. In fact, it further increased exploitation and limited voluntary migration and personal liberty in general. But it did not affect all Rwandans in the same way, it did not even disadvantage all of them. As paradoxical as it might seem at first glance, it was the court, the Rwandan monarchy, that was the first winner of European colonialism. Even when the Rwandan kings in the late 1920s finally fell into disregard, the then-ruling Tutsi class still benefitted from the formal sovereignty of their colonial masters, before the Belgians and the Catholic church switched their patronage in the late 1950s and let the Hutu claim power in the pre-independence revolution of 1959.⁴⁶ This is not the place to recount the whole of colonial and post-colonial Rwandan history. I will concentrate instead on the German and the early Belgian colonial phase.⁴⁷ What were the shifts and continuities in the way Rwanda was ruled, when and after the Europeans assumed, at first only formally, but then successively also enacted overlordship? More specifically, how did the advent and support of the Europeans allow the Rwandan monarchy not only to survive, but to win the civil war and moreover to consolidate both its territorial dominion and its arbitrary access to the population?

The coup of Rucunshu, as well as its aftermath, show that the monarchy was wobbling on the brink of disaster, but that powerful factions at court were still very much calculating how they could change the tide.⁴⁸ From the beginning of the 1890s onwards, plagues, diseases, famine, and expropriations shook the country. In 1895, King Rwabugiri died on one of his many campaigns. His son Rutarindwa was heir to the throne. However, this went against the interests of the powerful Ega lineage, which cleverly capitalized on a defeat of the officially always victorious Rwandan troops against a contingent of Belgian soldiers that, coming from the Congo Free State, had set up a military post at the southern end of Lake Kivu in 1896. The Rwandans attacked and tried to oust the foreigners, but had no chance of success against the rifles of the Europeans and were killed by the hundreds. Kanjogera, one of late Rwabugiri's wives, and her brothers from the Ega lineage blamed King Rutarindwa for this disastrous rout, managed to overthrow him, and installed their underage son and nephew Musinga on the throne.

The background to the European intrusion was a border dispute between the Belgian king and Germany that had only preliminarily been settled at the Berlin Africa Conference of 1884/85.⁴⁹ It was only after the "private" exploratory expedition of Count

46 One of the best accounts of the revolution is still R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, London 1970, pp. 93–286.

47 See A. L. Des Forges, *Defeat is the Only Bad News: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931* [1972], Madison 2011; I. Kabagema, *Ruanda unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft 1899–1916*, Frankfurt am Main 1993; C. Newbury, *Cohesion*, pp. 118sq; I. Nsengimana, *Le Rwanda et le pouvoir européen (1884–1952). Quelles mutations?*, Bern 2003; J. Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le régime du mandat belge (1916–1931)*, Paris 1992; a good overview is H.-W. Schmuhl, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft und Ethnogenese in Ruanda, 1897–1916*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 26 (2000) 2, pp. 307–334.

48 See Des Forges, *Defeat*, pp. 3–23; Kabagema, *Ruanda*, pp. 55–63; Vansina, *Antecedents*, pp. 173–179.

49 See W. R. Louis, *Ruanda–Urundi, 1884–1919*, Oxford 1963, pp. 3–97.

Götzen in 1894, during which the latter even met with Rwabugiri, that the Germans realized what they stood to lose, if they accepted Belgian claims to Rwandan territory east of Lake Kivu. Ignorant of the inner Rwandan power struggle, they thus sent a now-official military expedition to the Rwandan king to “offer” him a charter of protection. Captain Ramsay, who led the expedition, was in fact welcomed, albeit mistrustfully, at the court in 1897, which surprisingly accepted the charter and the German flag. Ramsay even sealed a blood pact with someone who pretended to be the king, but actually only represented the still underaged Musinga.⁵⁰

It is most likely that the court accepted the German “request” of protection not simply because it feared a further defeat. The Germans themselves, knowing well that they were not able to militarily subdue the Rwandan kingdom, wanted an alliance. The latter had surely learnt the lesson that military resistance against the Europeans was futile, but the Rwandans additionally must have thought that the Germans had expelled the Belgians from Kinyaga. So why not ally with those who seemed to have rather peaceful intentions and were obviously superior to the belligerent others? As a matter of fact, the Belgians had retreated sometime earlier, but not because they feared the Germans or had even been struck by them, but because they were fleeing mutinying African soldiers from another Belgian contingent, who roamed the area. In the eyes of the Rwandan court, however, the Germans had made their presence felt on behalf of the kingdom. To become their ally could only be profitable, even if it meant accepting their occasional presence and bizarre rituals of deference. This was a price the Rwandan usurpers were evidently willing to pay, for it not only helped them to finalize the coup, but also promised them the consolidation of their power over the land and its people.

The German colonial domination over Rwanda lasted until 1916, when Belgian troops marched into Kigali, the seat of the German residency. During these first two decades of colonialism, only a handful of Europeans lived in Rwanda, most of them neither soldiers nor administrators, but missionaries, who in 1900 began to found missions throughout the country, at first in regions that were not yet under the firm grip of the king.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the most recent – and many earlier – usurpations of the throne and the brutality of its reign, the monarchy was still a religiously legitimated institution. They thus had much greater reservations about accepting representatives of a proselytizing foreign religion in their realm than the politically rather reserved representatives of the colonial super-power. There is no doubt that the Germans decisively interfered in Rwandan politics, but, first of all, there were only few of them and, secondly, they did so in favour of the king. As long as the king remained loyal, they did not question

50 See H. Ramsay, Uha, Urundi und Ruanda, in: *Mittheilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten* 10 (1897), pp. 177–181; H. Ramsay, Über seine Expeditionen nach Ruanda und dem Rikwa-See, in: *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin* 25 (1898), pp. 303–323.

51 See Des Forges, *Defeat*, pp. 24–69; G. Mbonimana, *L'instauration d'un royaume chrétien au Rwanda (1900–1931)*, University of Leuven, PhD thesis 1981, pp. 84–113.

his authority over his subjects, even after they had learnt that it was not as absolute and geographically uninterrupted as they had assumed in the beginning.⁵²

On the contrary, they wanted to rely on, and even strengthen, the local elites in order to make them materially and politically interested in the colonial situation. The aim was to eventually benefit smoothly from the sometimes only imagined, as well as real riches of the colony.⁵³ Inasmuch as the Europeans succeeded in establishing a mutually advantageous indirect rule, a limited number of European officers, commanding gun-carrying, very often non-European troops, sufficed to uphold the colonial order.⁵⁴ And, in fact, the German-Rwandan and later, though with a different twist, Belgian-Rwandan cooperation thrived. The Belgians installed over and alongside the local chiefs, their own district administrators and formally trained Rwandan, i.e., Tutsi, clerks, augmented and standardized the exactions, pursued a policy of economic valorisation of the colony,⁵⁵ and, last but not least, deposed King Musinga in 1931, not in order to abolish kingship altogether, but to let the Catholic church crown a baptized Christian king.⁵⁶ Even if one might argue that through this act one religious legitimation has simply been supplanted by another, it in fact made visible that the usefulness of the Rwandan monarchy for establishing a European colony had finally come to an end.⁵⁷ This, however, did not mean that "the Tutsi", or rather a new class of colonially appointed (sub)chiefs and schooled clerks of aristocratic Tutsi origin, no longer effectively ruled and exploited a "negatively integrated", qua common abatement ethnicized Hutu majority.⁵⁸ And it did not mean that the revolution of 1959 ended the internal colonialism that had come into being. The revolution, though less the event itself than the ensuing political development of independent Rwanda, instead of revising the social order, simply inverted the top and bottom positions. Moreover, it is questionable whether the ethnic split has really been overcome in post-genocide Rwanda.⁵⁹

Long before, however, the Germans had helped the kingdom, primarily in order to actually occupy, subdue, and integrate provinces and territories that it claimed, but without effectively ruling it.⁶⁰ By colonizing Rwanda, they territorially secured its frontiers

52 In fact, attentive observers realized from early on that Musinga's or the Tutsi's rule were not undisputed (see R. Kandt, *Caput Nili: Eine empfindsame Reise zu den Quellen des Nils* [1904], Berlin 1921, p. 203; J. Czekanowski, *Forschungen im Nil-Kongo-Zwischengebiet*, vol. 1: *Ethnographie: Zwischenseengebiet Mpororo – Ruanda*, Leipzig 1917, pp. 252sq.).

53 See Kabagema, *Ruanda*, pp. 104–121, 143–179.

54 See T. von Trotha, *Koloniale Herrschaft: Zur soziologischen Theorie der Staatsentstehung am Beispiel des "Schutzgebietes Togo"*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 32–84; M. Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika: Expedition, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880*, Frankfurt am Main 2005, pp. 233–265.

55 See Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, pp. 145–163, 217–234; Nsengimana, *Le Rwanda*, pp. 445–490.

56 Des Forges, *Defeat*, pp. 211–240; Mbonimana, *L'Instauration*, pp. 327–336; Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, pp. 169–189.

57 R. Lemarchand, *In Search of the Political Kingdom*, in: id. (ed.), *African Kingdoms in Perspective: Political Change and Modernization in Monarchical Settings*, London 1977, pp. 1–32.

58 Exactly this is what the title of C. Newbury's book "The Cohesion of Oppression" alludes to.

59 See S. Straus / L. Waldorf (eds.), *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, Madison 2011.

60 See J.-P. Chrétien, *La Révolte de Ndungutse* (1912): *Forces traditionnelles et pression coloniale au Rwanda allemand*, in: *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 59 (1972) 217, pp. 645–680; A. L. Des Forges, "The Drum is

and brought the still existing, politically autonomous enclaves into line. The definite extension of central Rwandan administrative structures to and ultimate annexation of peripheral regions, the elimination of politically still autonomous units and their traditional Hutu leaders, who only formally recognized the power of the Rwandan king, the latter's replacement by Tutsi chiefs, who were either loyal to or even sent by the court, the replacement of previously only occasional respectful gifts to the king by regular levies and forced labour, and, finally, in particular, the quelling of open revolts of marginalized Tutsi aristocrats, still powerful Hutu chiefs and charismatic neo-traditional, as well as millenarian, rebels would not have been possible without the material – and military – help from the German and, incidentally, from very early on, also the Catholic colonialists. These, namely the order of the White Fathers – “white” because of their cowl, not their skin; Rwandans rather considered Europeans to be red – having been expelled from Buganda in the course of the religious wars of the late nineteenth century, had their own agenda of founding a Christian kingdom in Africa among newly converted, fervent, and devout believers, not yet corrupted by modernity.⁶¹ The Catholic missionaries regularly clashed with the German, mostly Protestant, in fact religiously rather indifferent, authorities, and sometimes even sided with oppressed or not yet colonized Hutu – among whom they were forced to set up their first stations – but, in the end, even before they cooperated more smoothly with the Belgians (if not vice versa), supported the German colonial policy.

The Belgians too, engaged in securing the territorial integrity or rather rounding of the kingdom. After the First World War, the British occupied and claimed parts of eastern Rwanda, including the formerly independent kingdom Gisaka, for themselves, since they wanted to construct (the never-realized) Cape-to-Cairo railroad solely on “British” territory and thus “needed” eastern Rwanda to connect British Uganda to British Tanganyika.⁶² The Belgians and the White Fathers were eager to support the supposedly historically warranted rights of the Rwandan court to Gisaka, which had, in fact, only recently been subdued by Rwanda and only reluctantly accepted its fate. Contrary to what had become known to the European authorities and missionary ethno-historians of Rwanda, to wit that the Rwandan kingdom was geographically and politically not as great and consistent as the first rumours, European speculations, and court histories would have it, the Belgians now accepted the Rwandan pretensions. In the end, they were able to successfully protect its colony, in general, and the labour potential of the eastern provinces, in particular. Likewise, the Catholics rallied behind the court and even fudged their historiographies to prevent British Protestant missionaries from taking over.⁶³ In the main, however, the Belgian imprint on Rwanda's internal colonialism

Greater than the Shout': The 1912 Rebellion in Northern Rwanda, in: D. Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, London 1986, pp. 311–331.

61 See I. Linden/J. Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, Manchester 1977; Mbonimana, *L'Instauration*.

62 See Rumiya, *Le Rwanda*, pp. 81–129.

63 See D. Newbury/C. Newbury, *Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda*, in: *American Historical Review* 105 (2000) 3, pp. 832–877, on pp. 848–850.

was to spread central Rwandan administrative structures all over the country, to further disrupt traditional, pre-political solidarity groups in favour of individualized relations of subordination, to aggravate the tax burden and labour obligations of the peasantry and to enhance the coercive capacities of the local chiefs. They demanded individual workloads and imposed new and standardized, partly even monetarized levies, while ignoring or even accepting the fact that their Rwandan Tutsi executives still insisted on the delivery of traditionally rather unregulated, qua “supra-colonial” backing even inflated tributes. *Uburetwa* is a case in point. It was a form of extended compulsory labour that was introduced under Rwabugiri and imposed on Hutu only. The Belgians believed – or wanted to believe – that *uburetwa* was a traditional service, which they first did not dare to reduce and then to abolish because, as it was assumed, such a measure would undermine the traditional authority of the chiefs.

Of course, it will not and cannot be disputed that the Europeans racialized the difference between Hutu and Tutsi, that they mistook these two socio-economic or socio-political groups to be different races or at least to have different cultural and geographic origins. But the difference as such, the asymmetry between a ruling and also culturally superior Tutsi minority and a second-rank, economically dependent, and politically unfree majority, called “Hutu”, is no colonial invention. It was the Europeans who prevented the Nyiginya dynasty, at least, from sinking, if not the whole Rwandan state from disintegrating, but they “only” froze a social setting, in which the ruling class already had begun to perceive itself as ethnically superior. What the court did or achieved with the aid of, if not by instrumentalizing, the Europeans was to turn the assumed Tutsi supremacy into a kind of internal colonialism, which applies when there is not only domination, but an ethnically justified, not necessarily racial, but at least culturally ascribed, subordination of one group to another. To repeat, this is not meant to redistribute blame or even historical responsibility for the genocide, but to sensitize us to the basically clear fact that “colonialism proper” is no European specialty and that European colonialism, as momentous as it was and still is, did not always interrupt, but sometimes rather reinforced pre-colonial – in this case colonial – trends. Thus, contrary to ex-president Bizimungu’s claim, European colonialism did not amputate a pre-colonially vaster Rwandan state; in reality, it consolidated an expanding, but staggering small empire, whose indigenous power holders exchanged their ambiguous “foreign” ambitions for the firm exploitation of internal “foreigners”.