Re-imagining Rwanda

Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century

Johan Pottier

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London



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Contents

List of maps		page x
Αc	Acknowledgements List of abbreviations	
Li		
	Introduction: information and disinformation in times of conflict	1
1	Build-up to war and genocide: society and economy in Rwanda and eastern Zaire	9
2	Mind the gap: how the international press reported on society, politics and history	53
3	For beginners, by beginners: knowledge construction under the Rwandese Patriotic Front	109
4	Labelling refugees: international aid and the discourse of genocide	130
5	Masterclass in surreal diplomacy: understanding the culture of 'political correctness'	151
6	Land and social development: challenges, proposals and their imagery	179
	Conclusion: representation and destiny	202
Appendix: Summary of key dates and events		208
No	Notes	
Bibliography		233
In	Index	

Maps

1	Rwanda	page xv
2	Great Lakes region	xvi
3	Rwanda: refugees and displaced populations, 31 March 1995	xvii

Build-up to war and genocide: society and economy in Rwanda and eastern Zaire

The eruption of conflict and civil war in the 1990s, in both Rwanda and eastern Zaire, had its origin in modern struggles for power and wealth. The world, however, easily overlooked this modern origin, since the confrontations it witnessed appeared to have taken on strongly ethnicised, seemingly 'tribal' overtones and justification. The Rwandan 1994 genocide in particular, more than the fighting in eastern Zaire (1996 onwards), was for too long and at too great a cost portrayed by the media as rooted in tribalism. Rwanda's bloodbath was not tribal. Rather it was a distinctly modern tragedy, a degenerated class conflict minutely prepared and callously executed. Most of the world failed to see it that way, and continued to think of the conflict – this after all was Africa – in terms of 'centuries-old tribal warfare'.

The power of shamelessly twisted ethnic argument for the sake of class privilege was demonstrated most shockingly in the blatant imaginings about history that galvanised Rwanda's 'Hutu Power' extremists. These extremists killed Rwanda's Tutsi and sent their bodies 'back to Ethiopia' via the Nyabarongo and Akagera rivers. The imagined origin of 'the Tutsi', along with their (poorly understood) migrations and conquest of Rwanda, were evoked by power-crazed Hutu politicians to instil 'ethnic hatred' in the very people they themselves oppressed: the victims of class oppression were spurred on to kill a minority group which the oppressors had labelled 'the real enemy'. Some 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu who declared their sympathy with the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) were slaughtered in a matter of three months. Today, those who govern post-genocide Rwanda also imagine the past in order to make sense of the present, but they do so in different, more subtle ways. Post-genocide leaders regard Rwanda's pre-colonial past as something of a golden era, a state of social harmony later corrupted by Europeans. Vital to the justification of minority rule, their message is delivered in a well-rehearsed manner and style, marked sometimes by omission (of well-established counter-evidence) and sometimes by disregard for context. Complexity and context are continuously screened out of contemporary representations of 'the Old Rwanda', as could be seen, for instance, in official testimonies just prior to Zaire's civil war (detailed in Chapter 5). Against available empirical evidence, the Rwandan government's representation of the historically evolved border separating the two countries evoked a late nineteenth-century situation in which Rwanda and eastern Zaire had been linked in political harmony.

Distortion, or the screening out of complexity and context, are techniques that work best in situations where confusion – about people's past, their identities, their rights – has been institutionalised and built into the fabric of everyday life. In situations of acute poverty, and both Rwanda and Zaire hit extreme levels of poverty in the late 1980s, institutionalised confusion becomes a weapon that power-hungry politicians wield to significant personal advantage and with deadly accuracy. In the early 1990s Zaire's Kivu province exemplified this power of confusion. On the brink of so-called 'ethnic' war, Kivu had an extraordinarily complex array of contradictory viewpoints on people and their entitlements. Not only did two quite different systems of land ownership and land access co-exist, but they co-existed in the midst of a bewildering range of 'conflicting laws and legal interpretations concerning land rights' (Fairhead 1997: 58). Claims to land depended on whether the claimant was considered 'autochthonous' or 'foreign', the latter being a rapidly expanding category. By the early 1990s, a sizeable proportion of Kivu's Kinyarwanda-speaking population, or Banyarwanda, had questionable identity and rights. The growth of this institutionalised confusion over land rights, combined with the 1981 withdrawal of citizenship for people of Rwandan origin, made it easy for so-called autochthones to recoup, often by violent means, the ancestral lands they had previously lost or claimed they had lost.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rwanda, too, was hit by institutionalised confusion. Its land shortages and disputes derived more from straightforward population pressure than from a complex political economy comparable to that of Kivu, yet here as well the laws regarding land were remarkably open to interpretation. As the country descended into economic chaos, the list of social categories barred from access to land was known to be growing rapidly. Like in Kivu, this generalised confusion played into the hands of the wealthy, who, when the crisis deepened, expertly reframed the nature of the crisis – from class struggle to ethnic struggle – in order to buy the loyalty of the oppressed. In combination, acute poverty, externally induced economic malaise and the ruthlessness of embattled politicians gave rise to a restless, deadly social layer of desperately poor, easy-to-manipulate young thugs.

Reframing the nature of economic hardship and class struggle means 'remembering' the past: who's who? where do my neighbours come from? who are they, really? what rights do they have, really? and are they not cultivating land my ancestors once owned? These questions are not unique to the conflict in Central Africa, but they are at the core of that continuous reinterpretation of reality which sustains the potential for conflict. As a result, this chapter is not just an overview of the local scene and its complexities, but also

an overview of how key aspects of the past – people's migrations, their identities, their entitlements – have recently come to assume new meanings. It is not the complexities *per se* that demand our attention, but the fact that they are easily reinterpreted for political gain.

The 'international community', we also need to recognise, engages actively with these 'local' discourses of identity, legitimacy and entitlement. Most crucially, international actors share with local stakeholders a propensity for simplistic visions, for decontextualised, standardised accounts of what is going on. The task in this chapter, then, is to provide and explore empirical evidence through which de-contextualised representations can be detected and queried. We begin with a look at what scholarly research over the past forty years, but especially in the 1960s and 1970s, has taught us about migration, arrangements for settlement, and the making of social identities in Rwanda and eastern Zaire.

Migration and social identity in Rwanda and eastern Congo-Zaire

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Rwanda's population was sparse and geographically mobile. Persistent drought and other calamity, including political upheaval, often resulted in people moving on a more or less permanent basis. Thus the famine called *Rwakayihura* (1928–29), which left 30,000 dead, caused some 100,000 people – or nearly 7 percent of Rwanda's then total population – to move to Uganda and the Belgian Congo (Cornet 1996: 10, 39). Another well-remembered famine, *Ruzagajura* (1943), also caused many Rwandans to move into Congo, where they settled in Bwisha, an area the kingdom of Rwanda had annexed around 1800 before losing it to Congo when Europe imposed its artificial borders (Fairhead 1989b). Many poor agriculturalists coped with *Ruzagajura* by moving away and joining better-off relatives elsewhere (Reisdorff 1952).

Migration was a common response also in the event of political strife. The political migrations significant to the present study include the exodus of Tutsi cattle keepers from western Rwanda into South Kivu when the Rwandan king Kigeri Rwabugiri expanded his administration in the nineteenth century, and the forced migration of some 150,000 Rwandan Tutsi who fled their country as independence approached (1959–61). The first migration, discussed in detail later, included the forebears of the group that in 1995–96 would be introduced to the world as 'the Banyamulenge'. Equally significant, in view of later developments, was the assisted migration of Rwandans to eastern Congo under Belgian rule, especially between 1937 and 1955, and the more recent internal distress migrations by communities and individuals facing acute land shortages. These latter migrations include both the relocation of numerous Hutu from Rwanda's

densely populated north-west to Bugesera in the east, where their arrival and hunger for land led to the massacre of Tutsi in 1992, and the migration in the early 1980s of Kivu-based Banyarwanda from Masisi to Walikale, where a good decade later many would be murdered by Nyanga militias in (once again) clashes over land.

Where land is scarce, claims are frequently contested on the basis of perceived social status. And perceptions of status change when circumstances change. The upshot is that certain communities or individuals may suddenly *be remembered* to have immigrant status, and thus be undeserving of land rights and citizenship. It is a fine line which divides history's 'true reality' from the way this reality is remembered; fact and fantasy easily become one.

Given the central importance of how the past is remembered, it is useful at the start of this study to take a look at some documented evidence regarding the chief migrations, their implications for identity formation, and their significance for the making and unmaking of political alliances.

Early migrations into Rwanda and the 1959 exodus of Rwandan Tutsi

One popular thesis about Rwanda's pre-colonial past holds that its three ethnic groups - Twa (0.5 per cent), Hutu (87 per cent) and Tutsi (12.5 per cent) arrived in Rwanda during different historical periods (Sirven 1975: 56-7). It seems certain that Twa arrived first, followed by Hutu, who cut large tracts of forest and confined Twa to whatever forest remained. Then came the Tutsi pastoralists. Related to the Hima people, one-time rulers of the Ugandan kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buha, the Tutsi arrived in successive waves, possibly from about the fifteenth century. In simplified pro-Tutsi terms, received wisdom claims that Hutu agriculturalists admired the Tutsi cattle so much that they readily accepted to be part of the well-organised Tutsi polity. The southwardly migrating Tutsi adopted the Hutu language and a good deal of Hutu culture before installing their own hegemony through the *nyiginya* dynasty, to which King Rwabugiri belonged. An extension of this narrative, popularised since Rwanda's 1994 genocide, stresses that the term ethnicity is inappropriate to Rwanda, that the country's inhabitants are all people of Rwanda (this is reviewed in Chapter 3). The concept of ethnic difference, the same narrative claims, was introduced after the European colonists invented the term.

While academics must always scrutinise received knowledge about the past, a point I shall return to in the conclusion of this book, it is equally imperative that they acknowledge that a good deal of empirical research on Rwanda's past has taken place, not just during the colonial period but also in the decades following independence in 1962. What then have we learned about this past? For the period up to 1860, it is correct to say that historians know next to nothing

about how the terms 'Twa', 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' were used in social discourse; whether these terms denoted social or physical classifications, for instance, is simply unclear. From about 1860, however, when Rwabugiri expanded the sphere of domination and influence of the Tutsi royal court, the situation becomes clearer. As research has revealed, Rwabugiri began, or consolidated, a process of ethnic polarisation. In the areas he brought under his control, Rwabugiri introduced a number of institutions, most notably *ubuhake* cattle clientship and a labour prestation called *uburetwa*, institutions which came to signify the loss of local political autonomy (Newbury 1988: 82). Uburetwa, the hated corvée labour service through which populations regained access to the lands they had lost to Rwabugiri, was the central institution; it was restricted to Hutu. Tutsi commoners, while also heavily exploited by the ruling central court and its aristocracy (Newbury 1978: 21, 1988: 13; Vidal 1969: 399; Chrétien 1985: 150), enjoyed freedom from uburetwa (Czekanowski 1917: 270-1; Jefremovas 1991a: 68; Newbury 1988: 140; Reyntjens 1985: 133-4; Rwabukumba and Mundagizi 1974: 22). The labour due under uburetwa was originally set at one day out of five, but it was raised by the chiefs to two or even three days out of six once the Belgian administration was in place (Lemarchand 1970: 122). In contrast, the labour service for Tutsi consisted merely of seasonal maintenance work on the reed enclosures surrounding chiefly residences (Newbury 1988: 140). Also exempt from uburetwa were Hutu selected to enter into cattle *ubuhake*, but all poor Hutu were bound by it. The number of Hutu allowed into the 'cattle contract', however, was never more than a small percentage of the population, whether in south-central Rwanda, where the central court was established, or in Kinyaga, south-western Rwanda, which Rwabugiri came to rule (Newbury 1981: 144, referring to Saucier 1974: 73-88). Even though many Hutu in Kinyaga owned cattle, relatively few had acquired their cattle through ubuhake (Newbury 1981: 139).

Uburetwa undermined the livelihood security of Hutu commoners and made survival more difficult. By the late nineteenth century, as Claudine Vidal argues for parts of south-central Rwanda, also known as Nduga, as much as half the Hutu peasantry was forced to sell its labour regularly. Among the poorest, both men and women would sell their labour, even though the more common pattern was for a man to sell his labour and for a woman to work her husband's land (Vidal 1974: 58–64). Vidal's informants may have exaggerated the size of this much-oppressed class of peasants, as Iliffe contends on the basis of Czekanowski's ethnographic research in 1907–8 (Iliffe 1987: 61–2), yet Iliffe accepts that the Polish ethnographer Czekanowski had been 'quick to see that the Tutsi ruled Rwanda as a conquered territory in which ubuletwa was the core of subjection' (Iliffe 1987: 62).² It was through uburetwa that social relations took on a strong ethnic character before the European colonists arrived.

14 Re-imagining Rwanda

For the south-western region of Kinyaga, where she researched, Catharine Newbury explains that ethnicity was not a principal organising factor before 1860, and that social mobility was common. Before Rwabugiri's administration 'made the labels of "Hutu" and "Tuutsi" meaningful and necessary in Kinyaga, social identification belonged principally to the unit that performed corporate political functions – in this case, the lineage or neighborhood residential group' (Newbury 1988: 11). At this time, a fluid situation marked by social mobility prevailed. Newbury summarises:

Social relations between land patrons and their clients were characterized by strong affective ties; outsiders who received land on the *ubukonde* domain enjoyed the position of a 'relative of inferior rank.' Even this subordinate status could disappear over time, as land clients often forged close links to the donor lineage through neighborhood friendships, or marriage alliance. The descendants of those who married into the lineage would sometimes come to be recognized members of the donor kin group. (Newbury 1988: 79)

The *ubukonde* domain, denoting a plot cut from forest and collectively owned, is a concept policy makers in Rwanda have recently re-examined and re-presented. The theme will be taken up in Chapter 6.

With the arrival of Rwabugiri and his administrators, Newbury notes that

classification into the category of Hutu or Tuutsi tended to become rigidified. *Lineages that were wealthy in cattle and had links to powerful chiefs were regarded as Tuutsi; lineages lacking these characteristics were relegated to non-Tuutsi status.* During the period of Tuutsi rule, later overlaid by European rule, the advantages of being Tuutsi and the disadvantages of being Hutu increased enormously. (Newbury 1988: 11; emphasis added)

This passage is fundamental: *wealth, not race*, was the basis of the ethnic distinction between Hutu and Tutsi. Importantly, however, the number of cattleowning lineages at that time was not very large (see Chapter 3).

Despite the harsh conditions Rwabugiri imposed, it seems right to suggest that some kind of harmonious co-existence had evolved by the turn of the century, since the districts subjected to central rule were headed by two officials – one Hutu, one Tutsi – who worked independently of one another. The Hutu land chief acted as arbitrator in land disputes and organised agricultural tribute (*ikoro*) and dues in labour (*uburetwa*), while the Tutsi cattle chief was responsible for collecting taxes on cattle (Kagame 1972; Lemarchand 1968). To these two chiefs a third one, the army chief, must be added; he, too, was appointed by the king (*mwami*). In certain ways, the land chief and cattle chief engaged in continuous reciprocal surveillance, a pastime from which the *mwami* and the Hutu masses derived some benefit. Tutsi cattle chiefs needed to listen to the complaints put forward by their Hutu colleagues in order to safeguard or extend their own

powers (Reyntjens 1985: 113–15). When the Belgian administration abolished this tripartite structure in 1926, wrongly assuming this would better the lot of the Hutu masses, the latter ceased to be politically represented. It was one of many colonial interventions that sharply accentuated, indeed racialised, the Hutu–Tutsi ethnic division. But it was Rwabugiri, and not the Europeans, who crafted ethnic labels on the basis of cattle ownership; a point Alexis Kagame, the central court's renowned historian, once made himself when discussing the tripartite surveillance system. In this system, Kagame wrote, the Hutu land chief (*umutware ubutaka*) had authority over subjects who did not possess any cattle (Kagame 1972: 184–5).

The Belgian colonists also amplified, one might say created, Rwanda's regional north–south divide, another strong identity marker, when they aided the central court in its campaign to subjugate those areas still outside its influence, especially the north-west and the Hutu kingdoms of Bukunzi and Busozo (see Map 1). These regions did not come under rule by the central region until the 1920s, when Belgium intervened militarily to impose 'double colonialism' (Reyntjens 1985: 176–7). Belgium supported the Tutsi royal court right up to the eve of independence. Although the colonial power destroyed the mythicoreligious underpinnings of divine kingship over a period of several decades, a quasi-secularisation process ending with Rwanda's 'consecration to Christ the King' in 1947, Belgium continued to politically support the Rwandan Tutsi aristocracy. Only in the late 1950s did the Belgian administration bow to international pressure by the UN and switch sides, abruptly, to support the Hutu social revolution.

When violence erupted in 1959, many Rwandan Tutsi fled to Uganda, where they were welcomed because of their historical connection with the Bahima royal family. These long-standing ties had been reinforced in the nineteenth century when 'Rwanda extended its nominal hegemony to Bufumbira', which lies in present-day Kigezi district (Otunnu 1999a: 6). The relationship meant that the Tutsi and Bahima royal families were always ready to help each other when trouble struck (Byaruga 1989: 150). The arrival of Rwandan refugees, mostly Tutsi, which continued for a number of years, would inevitably impact on Bufumbira, where conditions resembled those left behind in Rwanda. Foster Byaruga (1989) details the scene:

there are two ethnic groups: the Bahima and the Bairu. The Bahima were the traditional rulers while the Bairu were the serfs, like the Bahutu in Rwanda. Traditionally, though now disappearing, there have been conflicts between the ruling Bahima and the ruled Bairu. So whereas the Bahima were willing to let the Batutsi come in, the Bairu saw them as invaders who had to be fought and thrown out. The Batutsi were coming in to join hands with the Bahima to take away the little land belonging to Bairu. (Byaruga 1989: 150)

Since the refugees arrived at a time when the power struggles between Bahima and Bairu had intensified, serious political impact seemed unavoidable (Otunnu 1999a: 13). To add to the complexity and potential for future conflict over resources, some 200,000 economic refugees, mostly Hutu, had arrived in south Uganda during the colonial period after fleeing Belgium's regime of state-conscripted labour and fierce taxation (Otunnu 1999a: 5). As in eastern Congo-Zaire, colonialism created a complex 'ethnic' map.

The free and easy movement of people across the Rwanda–Uganda border continued until the early 1960s, when exiled Tutsi launched incursions into Rwanda hoping to retake the country (Otunnu 1999a: 7). On realising that the incursions heightened political tensions in Rwanda, which in turn increased the likelihood of new retaliation against Tutsi and thus further exodus, the Ugandan authorities decided to patrol the Rwanda–Uganda border more effectively.

Migrations from Rwanda into South Kivu

Migrations from Rwanda into South Kivu also continued in an open-ended fashion until 1959–61. And here too, as with Uganda, border crossings had a long history.

One early migration, particularly well remembered and meaningful today, occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century, possibly earlier, when a great number of people from Rwanda, nearly all Tutsi, arrived in eastern Congo. The bulk of these immigrants, as their descendants recalled in the early 1970s, had fled Rwanda because of King Rwabugiri's administrative/military campaign and the heavy taxation system (Depelchin 1974: 68; also Newbury 1988: 48–9). Following their arrival in Congo, the king of the Bafulero, also known as Fulero or Furiiru, gave the Tutsi immigrants grazing land in exchange for an animal tribute (Depelchin 1974: 70). They settled between Mulenge and the upper Sange river (1974: 65–6) and stopped paying tribute to Rwanda's central court (see Map 2). Situated at an altitude of some 1,800 meters, Mulenge became the immigrants' quasi-capital, while the migrants began to be referred to as 'Banya-Mulenge' (1974: 70). The integration, though, was not unproblematic. From about 1924, when the extortionist demands of the then mwami Mokogabwe decimated their herds, many Banyamulenge fanned out to Mulenge's south and west. Some families moved 'as far as Itombwe where they found vast stretches of flat and excellent grazing land, and also the long-sought after isolation from other ethnic groups as well as from the colonizers' law. Paradoxically, however, the movement away from the Furiiru capital [Lemera] increased the Tutsi's reliance on the Furiiru for food' (Depelchin 1974: 71–2). This reliance produced a situation in which Bafulero cultivators would regularly take surplus food to 'Banya-Mulenge' in the hope of receiving cattle, a vital ingredient in Fulero bridewealth (1974: 75).

After Mokogabwe's death in 1930, many Tutsi returned to Mulenge to enjoy renewed wealth because of their highly mobile, instantly transformable cattle. But they faced an obstacle that with the years would grow in significance: the land was not theirs (1974: 75). Banyamulenge never secured their own modern administration (*collectivité*), which perpetuated their political vulnerability. In South Kivu, where the administrative map coincides roughly with an ethnic map drawn up under colonialism, Banyamulenge were the only group not to secure their own administration (Reyntjens and Marysse 1996: 15).

This state of affairs, in which substantial wealth and political insecurity existed side by side, turned disastrous during the 1964-65 rebellion in eastern Congo, when Banyamulenge once again lost a great deal of their herds (Depelchin 1974: 80). The rebellion had been launched, alongside other rebellions in Kwilu, Kisangani, Maniema and northern Katanga, because of people's frustration over the country's deteriorating political and economic situation. The fruits of independence were not being shared out. Also known as the 'Muleliste' rebellion, after Pierre Mulele who directed the insurrection in Kwilu province, the uprising brought latent ethnic antagonisms to the fore. Drawn mainly from Bafulero, Bavira and Babembe groups, the rebels in eastern Congo indiscriminately killed wealthy people, both within their own groups and among those whose ancestors had come from Rwanda and Burundi. Wealth meant cattle, stores and trucks (1974: 56). Facing an increasing problem over access to land, Bafulero, as the region's first inhabitants, or 'autochthones', now strongly resented the presence of immigrants from Rwanda and Burundi, and became vocal about what they perceived to be their indigenous rights.

So drastic was the decimation of Tutsi herds that it forced some Tutsi out of cattle keeping and into the market for casual agricultural labour. The transition caused severe distress, since Tutsi regarded tilling the soil to be well beneath their dignity (1974: 81–2). As casual labourers to wealthy Bafulero, poor Banyamulenge were still a statistical rarity by the early 1970s, even though other Tutsi from Mulenge were now also experiencing reduced prosperity. Their economic decline was caused once again by circumstances they did not control. Depelchin explains that 'Furiiru were no longer eager to carry food to the Tutsi. They had realized that the same quantity of food sold on the market could buy [not just one] but two or more cows. The Furiiru felt they were being cheated' (Depelchin 1974: 76–7). But Banyamulenge, too, felt cheated. After losing so many cattle during the rebellion, they simply could not afford to sell at low prices. As a result, their 'bitterness and resentment against those who initiated the 1964 rebellion', blamed mostly on Bafulero, continued (Depelchin 1974: 82).

This suffering made Banyamulenge side with President Mobutu's national army, which, in 1966, crushed the rebellion. Mobutu's army also had the backing of mercenaries and other local groups opposed to Bafulero and

Babembe, notably Bashi from Kabare. Still, it was the contribution of the Banyamulenge which would live on in people's memory. At the time of the 1996 'Banyamulenge' uprising, Jean-Claude Willame wrote that 'in South Kivu, people readily recall that during the 1960s the Banyamulenge helped the national army with its bloody repression of the local insurrections. So, too, in Maniema [capital: Kindu], where entire villages still accuse one another of having taken part in repressive raids.' The passage is of interest as it reminds us that past events are often recalled in different, sometimes opposed ways. Where autochthones remember the ferocity of Banyamulenge during the repression, Banyamulenge recall the persistent insecurity which resulted from the rebellion itself. As this rebellion had threatened the economic and cultural survival of the Banyamulenge community, a group politically unrecognised, its members had had little choice but to side with those who tried to crush it.

The end of the rebellion sent leaders into exile, but only temporarily. When they returned to relaunch the maquis, a lasting rift occurred between Gaston Soumialot, who had led the rebellion in eastern Congo, and Laurent Désiré Kabila, who had served as a second-rank commander. Their differences came into the open in 1967 when Kabila re-entered Fizi to set up his own base at Kibamba, 'where he was welcomed by the population of the *collectivité* of Lulenge' (Cosma 1997: 15). From here, Kabila pursued his utopic socialist dream and on 24 December 1967 launched the Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP). Kabila's followers, however, were mainly Babembe from the administrative *secteurs* of Lulenge, Ngandja and Itombwe (Cosma 1997: 43). A mere footnote at the time, but phenomenally important three decades later and not understood by the international community, these Babembe resented their Banyamulenge neighbours. By November 1996, the world had forgotten how Banyamulenge had suffered in the rebellion before taking Mobutu's side. A lasting alliance between Banyamulenge and Kabila? – not very likely.

Ethnic prejudice by Babembe against their Tutsi neighbours, now increasingly calling themselves Banyamulenge, was rampant by the late 1980s. Wilungula Cosma, who originates from eastern Zaire, observed after his field research:

Babembe consider Tutsi to be good-for-nothings, incapables, lacking in physical strength, uncircumcised, an inferior people who drink milk all day and bemoan not their dead but their cattle. For their part, Tutsi regard Babembe as trouble makers, barbaric, haughty, good only for heavy [agricultural] labour in exchange for a calf close to death. (Cosma 1997: 24, referring to Kimona Kicha 1982)

While some Banyamulenge and Banyarwanda elites may have benefited from helping Mobutu to crush the rebellion, the major weakness of Banyamulenge, their not having their own land and administration, their own *collectivité*, continued. This vulnerability was revealed starkly in July 1987 when 'Rwandan'

residents in South Kivu boycotted the elections, angry that their candidates had been left off the ballot papers. The boycott, moreover, reminded the residents of South Kivu how the results of a previous election had been annulled after a 'Rwandan' candidate was elected. The power and influence of 'the Rwandans' was increasingly feared by the autochthonous population, whose politicians became adept at exploiting this sentiment.

Fear of Banyarwanda, some sources suggest, was not unfounded. Although the majority of Banyamulenge had suffered during the rebellion, their assistance to Mobutu had brought significant economic advantages to some. Besides being empowered to levy taxes in local markets, some Banyamulenge authorities allegedly gained a superior ability to access land.

According to B. Muchukiwa [n.d.], the economic power of Banyamulenge increased notably: the old 'volontaires' recruited by the Congolese army to track down [Muleliste] rebels 'now have a real stronghold over the [autochthonous] populations; they begin to acquire tracts of land and collect tributes and taxes in a number of markets in Itombwe'. (Willame 1997: 83)

This portrayal may well offer another glimpse of how history is selectively reworked and re-presented. While certain Banyamulenge benefited from their opposition to the Muleliste rebellion, as Muchukiwa asserts, the majority had remained poor and economically vulnerable, as Depelchin's research (1974) has shown so very clearly (also Vlassenroot 2000). The vulnerability of the Banyamulenge majority would come into focus again when over a million Rwandan Hutu refugees fled to Kivu in 1994.

Migrations from Rwanda into North Kivu

Before the planned migrations got under way in 1937, some Rwandans, Hutu and Tutsi, had already migrated into North Kivu, possibly from about the seventeenth century. Following his research in Bwisha, North Kivu, James Fairhead gave this account of the early migrations:

Bwisha was relatively independent of Rwandan rule until the mid-nineteenth century. During the seventeenth and eighteenth century there was a gradual influx of a few Batutsi pastoralists into highland Bwisha, who came searching for good pasture which was available in the harvested fields and recently abandoned fallows of Bwisha. Like other outsiders, the Batutsi initially recognized the legitimacy of the Bahutu Chiefs, who maintained their political independence from the pastoralists. (Fairhead 1989b: 5)

With time, and under conditions of increasing population density, Banyarwanda in Bwisha would become part of a complex ethnic mosaic, which also comprised Banande, some Batwa (Bwisha's presumed first inhabitants), Bakiga and Bafumbira from Kigezi in Uganda (Pottier and Fairhead 1991: 441).

Banyarwanda arrived in high numbers during colonialism, when Belgium ran its programme for planned in-migration. Running parallel to the steady flow of spontaneous migrants who fled drought and famine, assisted migrants were picked by the colonial administration to work the plantations or to decongest Rwanda of excess cattle (Fairhead 1990; Newbury 1988). The planned insertion of Banyarwanda into North Kivu had two peak waves – from 1937 to 1945 (25,000 arrivals), and from 1949 to 1955 (60,000 arrivals). A great many immigrants in the 1930s settled in Rutshuru, but the bulk, arriving later, moved to sparsely populated Masisi, Bwito and Lubero.

The assisted migrations caused heavy pressure on land, grazing land especially, so much so that local Hunde chiefs regularly complained that there was 'too great a proportion of Batutsi among the immigrants' (Reyntjens and Marysse 1996: 14). Also of long-term significance, Belgium pursued its own brand of apartheid by having separate settlements for Banyarwanda and 'autochthones', with Hutu chiefs being appointed for the areas where assisted migrants had settled. The supreme appointment was that of Hutu chief Ndeze II who, except for some five years around independence, ruled Bwisha from 1920 until 1980 (Fairhead 1990: 84–6). This strategy of appointing Hutu chiefs was aimed at creating a contrast with Ruanda-Urundi, where Tutsi administrators were in control (Tshibanda Mbwabwe wa Tshibanda 1976: 224; Willame 1997: 42), but resulted in the marginalisation of educated Hunde, Nyanga, Nande and other autochthones. By raising 'ethnic' consciousness, the strategy backfired after independence.

Identity, land and the politics of entitlement

Despite regular out-migrations before and during European colonialism, Rwanda's history of land occupation became a catalogue of dwindling entitlements due to population pressure. Throughout the twentieth century, family farms in Rwanda decreased, a process accompanied by deepening poverty. By the middle of the twentieth century, 'the typical [Rwandan] peasant family lived on a hill which supported between 110 and 120 inhabitants per km²; in 1970, that same family [had] to make a living on a hill which support[ed] between 280 and 290 people per km²' (Prioul 1976: 74). The impact on food production was profound: compared with the average family of a generation ago, households now harvested half the customary amounts of sorghum, beans and bananas (Meschi 1974: 49). Official efforts to intensify agriculture notwithstanding, the downward trend continued and the statistics turned alarming. From two million inhabitants in 1940, the population in 1991 had reached 7.15 million (Waller 1993: 47). 'If it increases at 3.1 per cent each year,' David Waller concluded, 'the population of Rwanda will have reached 10 million by 2002 AD' (1993: 47). The national average of people per square kilometer of arable land had already shot up to 422, with one northern commune reaching 820 (1993: 18). This occurred in the early 1990s, and there was virtually no more arable land to be claimed. On top of this, elites close to President Habyarimana were buying up land sold because of poverty, especially in the north-west from where they originated. Rooted in the growing disparity between rich and poor, the boom of this illegal land market was accompanied by a discourse of social exclusion (detailed in Chapter 6).

In earlier decades, the government of Rwanda (GOR) had 'sought development' through reliance on donor assistance, which often meant pursuing a project-based strategy aimed to raise off-farm incomes (Godding 1987; Nkundabashaka and Voss 1987). Such projects, however, were rarely friendly to the environment, hardly ever self-financing and did not really boost incomes (Pottier 1993). Resource-poor farmers reacted in three ways: by allocating the maximum possible amount of land to the cultivation of cash crops (mainly bananas and coffee); by cultivating marshlands (marais), which were state-owned:8 and by maximising income through seasonal wage labour. As households often needed to pursue all three strategies simultaneously, calamity struck when the international coffee price plunged by over 50 per cent in 1989. This lethal blow to Rwanda's economy came when the International Coffee Agreement reached a deadlock because of 'political pressures from Washington on behalf of the large US coffee traders' (Chossudovsky 1997: 111). With 60 per cent of Rwanda's smallholders growing coffee, the collapse demonstrated that Rwanda was now firmly in the grip of forces it did not control (Waller 1993: 60). The collapse sentenced many poor to unprecedented levels of despair, making them vulnerable to manipulation by politicians in search of extreme solutions to their country's (and their own) growing insecurity.

The year 1989 was calamitous also in other ways. Throughout the 1980s the government of Rwanda (GOR) had rescued poor smallholders by building upon the National Food Strategies concept which the European Community had introduced (CEC 1982). Accepting that food security depended more on distribution and exchange than actual availability, the Rwandan government had agreed to set up the Office pour la Promotion, la Vente et l'Importation des Produits Agricoles (OPROVIA), which would protect farmgate prices for two staple crops: beans and sorghum. OPROVIA bought post-harvest surpluses at prices well above those in the deflating 'free market' and sold stocks below 'free market' prices when smallholders could not afford to pay more. OPROVIA's commitment to price stabilisation was courageous, but, lacking financial muscle, the policy could not be sustained without strong government backing.

Following the very poor harvests of 1988, a disaster coinciding with the influx of refugees from Burundi and an official ban on food imports, the Rwandan government failed to underwrite OPROVIA's debts. In April 1989, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry admitted that government

had let OPROVIA down: 'The Rwandan Government still needs to reimburse OPROVIA the promised 28.000.000 RwF it lost in 1988 after selling at artificially low prices the sorghum it had bought too dearly in 1986' (République Rwandaise 1989: 4). At about the same time, possibly earlier, government also dropped its support to the Cooperative Movement, which had become a hotbed for social contestation and change (Pottier 1989b). Smallholders loathed the lack of public support, particularly in south Rwanda where suspicion towards the ruling north grew day by day.

The question 'Who rules Rwanda?' became pertinent when Habyarimana, under pressure from the European Economic Community (EEC), agreed upon a Structural Adjustment Programme with the World Bank/IMF in the wake of the crash in coffee incomes (Newbury 1998: 89). This happened just three months before the RPF invaded in October 1990 (Kamukama 1997: 52; Prunier 1995: 160). Following the invasion, as the different sides struggled for supremacy, it became alarmingly clear that multi-partyism did not mean democracy and that much of Rwanda's sovereignty was now 'invested in the Paris Club of creditor nations, in the European Community, and in the World Bank' (Waller 1993: 27). Rwanda had been sold.

Politicians faithful to Habyarimana began to organise in an informal structure called 'Hutu Power', itself something of a club (Prunier 1995: 188); they reacted to the selling of Rwanda by redefining the enemy within: the class antagonism and the threat of militancy which they themselves faced were converted into 'ethnic hatred' and a readiness to kill the 'real' – now ethnicised – enemy. The tactic was tried out in March 1992 in Bugesera, where landless Hutu from the north-west had resettled. Competing for land with Bugesera's Tutsi, themselves resettlers from the 1950s, and 'encouraged' by the exceedingly explicit, 'Hutu Power' threats that Tutsi needed to be sent back to their (imagined) homeland in Ethiopia, the northern Hutu migrants took out their anger on Tutsi and members of opposition parties, killing at least 300 Tutsi (Africa Watch 1992; Reyntjens 1994: 308). The most explicit threat had come from Léon Mugesera, vice-president of the country's formerly sole political party, Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND), who in November 1992 incited the Hutu majority to eliminate all Tutsi and everyone opposed to Habyarimana. "Your country is Ethiopia," Mugesera told Tutsi, "and we shall soon send you back via the Nyabarongo [river] on an express journey. There you are. And I repeat, we are quickly getting organised to begin this work" (original quotation in Reyntiens 1994: 119). The Bugesera massacres, and later massacres in Gisenyi prefecture (1992–93), resulted in an inquiry mandated by the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), Africa Watch, the Union africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples and the Montreal-based Centre international des droits de la personne et du développement démocratique. The inquiry exposed many human rights

violations and warned that the rising tide of political extremism could easily develop into unprecedented chaos and violence (FIDH *et al.* 1993).

By now Rwanda was a country at war with the RPF, which had invaded from Uganda. The timing of this invasion, some sources allege, was linked to the so-called 'old caseload' refugees from 1959 overstaying their welcome.

Rwanda's Tutsi ('59-ers') in Uganda

The arrival in Uganda of the Rwandan refugees from 1959–61, especially of Tutsi cattle keepers, made a dramatic political and environmental impact as the country passed through successive political regimes (Byaruga 1989; Otunnu 1999a). With time, the refugees' meddling in politics, their high-profile military engagements and privileged status as refugees resulted in a gradual swell of anti-Tutsi sentiment, also dubbed 'hospitality fatigue' (Otunnu 1999a: 10). There had been early warnings that the Rwandan Tutsi refugees might overstay their welcome, as when Prime Minister Milton Obote told them in the 1960s to stop using Uganda as a base for attacking their home country (Lemarchand 1970: 208–9).

Anti-Tutsi sentiment escalated under Obote's first government, which emphasised Ugandanisation, while life under President Amin brought no improvements either. When the Amin era ended with the return of Obote, the armed faction of the Rwandan Tutsi refugees chose to join opposition leader Yoweri Museveni, who was of Hima origin and thus 'related' to the Rwandan Tutsi. Joining Museveni's bush war against Obote intensified the persecution of ordinary Tutsi refugees, especially at the hands of Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party. The snowball effect was immediate and brutal. A series of ambushes by Tutsi soldiers, in which unarmed Ugandan civilians were killed,

induced the [Obote] regime and UPC functionaries to target Rwandese refugees in the army and elsewhere for reprisals. The more [Museveni's] Popular Resistance Army (PRA, later the National Resistance Army – NRA) intensified its armed struggle, the more the regime and the UPC functionaries terrorized Rwandese refugees. The more the refugees were persecuted, the more they fled and joined the NRA. The more they joined the NRA, the more their increased presence in the NRA tended to confirm the claim that the NRA was a Tutsi organization. (Otunnu 1999a: 17)

This strong Rwandan Tutsi support for Museveni's war set the scene for official condemnations and sanctions, which culminated in the massacre and eviction of many Rwandan refugees in the early 1980s. When tens of thousands were forcefully repatriated to Rwanda, the Habyarimana regime reacted nervously and confined the repatriates to isolated, heavily guarded camps (Otunnu 1999a: 20–2).

24 Re-imagining Rwanda

Following Museveni's military victory in 1986, greatly assisted by high-ranking Rwandan refugee officers, Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame among them, Uganda's new president continued to make use of the 'warrior refugees' in counter-insurgencies in Acholi, Teso, West Nile and other unsettled regions. The partnership meant that a Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), with the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) as its political wing, could develop and prepare for an invasion of Rwanda more or less undetected. Many factors influenced the invasion and its timing, not in the least Museveni's wish to see the powerful and all too visible Rwandan military 'removed' from Uganda (Otunnu 1999b: 38). When, on 1 October 1990, this wish turned into reality, the invasion intensified anti-Rwandan sentiment inside Uganda. It was now official: the Rwandan refugee guests, and their warriors, had overstayed their welcome (see Otunnu 1999b for a comprehensive overview).

Eastern Congo-Zaire

Two episodes in the history of eastern Congo-Zaire – colonisation by the Rwandan state from about the mid-nineteenth century, and the arrival of successive waves of Rwandan migrants under Belgian rule – impacted seriously on land rights. Regarding the first episode, Fairhead (1989b) has argued that while there is uncertainty over 'how and when the Batutsi came to rule over Bwisha', it is much better established that there have been different times and forms of rule. This diversity, as we shall see in Chapter 5, was negated by Rwanda's postgenocide leaders when they explained their moral assistance to Banyamulenge in terms of a 'Greater Rwanda' polity. For Bwisha, Fairhead highlights the diverse, historically evolved interactions with central Rwanda, noting first that

[i]t is important to distinguish between . . . (a) conquering, (b) rule through delegates, and (c) economic exploitation of the region through systematic taxation. Although Bwisha seems to have been 'conquered' more than 500 years ago, it was ruled by delegates from the Rwandan royal court only from the late eighteenth century, and was systematically taxed only from the mid-nineteenth century. (Fairhead 1989b: 3)

'Conquering' refers to periodic incursions by Rwandan monarchs that did not alter the system of rule by traditional ('autochthonous') chiefs, called Bahinza. In the late eighteenth century, rule by Rwanda became more direct and delegates were sent from the central court to rule over annexed territory. These delegates displaced the Bahinza chiefs in an administrative overhaul completed under King Rwabugiri (1853–95), who imposed heavy taxes and enforced labour, *uburetwa*. Rwanda's rule over its out-reaches, however, was 'continually disputed by the inhabitants, and the *mwami* could not always find delegates brave enough to accept the posting'. This resulted in a diversity of structured engagements:

In certain areas, the Monarchy was more powerful than in others. Jomba, which was quite heavily inhabited by the Batutsi, was the province most under the control of Rwanda, and was ruled by imposed Batutsi delegates of the king, who ousted the Bahinza. In Gisigari, where Batutsi did not live until 1910, less control could be exerted by Rwanda, and the indigenous Bahinza maintained their positions as Chiefs there, although they still depended for their power on the Rwandan *mwami*. In the sparsely populated and heavily forested principalities of Bukoma, Binza, Bwito and Masisi, Rwandan influence was less strong still, but nevertheless local leaders were obliged to pay tax to the Royal court to maintain their positions, and prevent invasion. (Fairhead 1989b: 3)

As a similar array of arrangements existed elsewhere in the region; for instance, in Bunande and Bushi, we may conclude that the varied quality of local administrative links with Rwanda's royal court marked the whole length of the Congo-Rwanda border.

Fixing territories and the international border was an act of colonial intervention. In Bwisha in 1910, 'the existing Provinces which were ruled by the Rwandan mwami through his mandates were officially recognized as "autonomous Chiefdoms", [while] the provincial Chiefs, who were the delegates of the Rwandan *mwami*, were given the power to continue to rule along traditional lines, as long as "public order" was not disturbed' (Fairhead 1989b: 4). In 1918, Belgium also intervened to radically alter the administration of eastern Congo, which it did by creating a ruthless 'traditional' structure capable of extorting labour at very low rates of pay. Belgium's policy succeeded throughout Kivu: 'In Uvira, Bunande, Bushi, Bwisha, and Fizi, local Chiefs who were more or less powerful in their domains were reinforced by colonial authority, and made vastly more powerful. This policy (not tradition) is responsible for the creation of powerful Bami [kings] throughout the region' (Fairhead 1989b: 4). Under this regime of invented tradition, some of the new powerful kings were able to sell not only the land of their own people, but also land previously under the jurisdiction of chiefs whom the Belgian authorities did not favour. Thus Ndeze II, who came to control all of Bwisha following his elevation to mwami in 1929, saw fit to colonise Bwito. He ousted Bwito's Bahunde chiefs and installed his own Bahutu delegates. To protect Bwisha and destroy his enemies in Bwito, Ndeze II asserted vacancy and sold large areas of Bwito for personal gain (Fairhead 1989b: 8). The situation which resulted is best described as institutional confusion.

Despite 'fixing' the Congo-Rwanda border, the Belgian authorities encouraged further population movement into Kivu to meet the need for plantation workers and administrators. To obtain land for the migrants, whose move to North Kivu they had authorised, the Belgian authorities made autochthonous chiefs sign lease agreements in return for financial compensation (Pabanel 1991: 33). This kind of expropriation was not too problematic in the less densely populated areas, including Masisi, but it was more difficult in Rutshuru, where

the older plantations were located. Here, there was 'confusion of land rights between plantations and the new immigrants' (Fairhead 1989b: 12); a confusion aggravated by the influx of Bwisha highlanders who were seeking to be relocated.

The high number of immigrants, combined with the extensive need for pasture, meant that the potential for future contestations over land rights was now in place. The crisis would have its first climax in the deregulatory aftermath of Congo's independence, when autochthones voted with their feet and entered the Banyarwanda settlements to reclaim their 'inheritance'. Throughout Kivu, those who considered themselves to be the rightful inheritors of land began to (re?)claim what they considered to be inalienable, ancestral land (Fairhead 1989b: 15). The outcome was that the Rwandan immigrants and their descendants, who believed they had been allocated land on an inheritable basis, came to be 'redefined as "impostors" who had no long-term rights' (Fairhead 1989b: 15–16). Banyarwanda migrants thus became targets for confrontation because of their 'foreignness', a problem some Banyarwanda managed to overcome through a strategy of dispersal (Willame 1997: 44). Difficulties notwithstanding, many Banyarwanda, often from Rutshuru and linked to Ndeze II, would rise to prominence in commerce and politics.

The Banyarwanda sense of vulnerability was increased in 1959-61 when Tutsi refugees from Rwanda entered Kivu. Following an initial spell in UNHCR camps in Masisi, Walikale and Kalehe, these refugees progressively integrated themselves into existing communities, while a good number also joined the 'Muleliste' rebellion in Uvira-Fizi (Young 1970: 996). More Tutsi refugees followed after Rwanda's pogroms of 1963-64, prompted by the failed invasion of Bugesera by armed Tutsi exiles from Burundi. At this point, demographic pressure and Banyarwanda affluence combined to set off eastern Zaire's first 'nationality crisis'. Until 1964, Banyarwanda had had voting rights in the République Démocratique du Congo, then a young state; nationality had not been an issue. But land scarcity and the migrants' economic success turned 'nationality' into an issue for public debate and scape-goating. The more Banyarwanda and autochthonous elites jostled for political power, the more strongly the theme of 'the foreigner' – and that of ethnicity – emerged in political discourse. Banyarwanda in Kivu now stood accused of having massively infiltrated the host nation.

The 1964 Constitution did not help Banyarwanda. It granted Congolese nationality only to those residents 'with an ancestor who [was] or had been a member of a tribe or part of a tribe established within the Congolese territory before 18 October 1908' (cited in Willame 1997: 46). The majority of Banyarwanda were excluded. One direct consequence of the new law, and highly significant in the rise of 'ethnic consciousness', was that Masisi's Hutu administrators, appointed under colonial rule, were replaced by autochthones, mostly Hunde. This loss of power for Banyarwanda resulted in a loss of property: houses, shops,

cattle, plantations were all (re?)claimed by autochthones. When Banyarwanda fought back to regain their civil and political rights, their resolve made them liable to the accusation they were 'Muleliste' guerillas. While unfounded in the vast majority of cases, the accusation led to scores of Banyarwanda – Hutu and Tutsi – being tortured, expelled or killed.

In the long run, however, President Mobutu had a strategic plan for eastern Congo-Zaire from which many Banyarwanda would benefit. This plan encouraged the political ascendancy of leaders whose ethnic groups could not possibly threaten central government, either because they were numerically insignificant on the national scale or because they had an ambiguous status. Fulfilling both these conditions, Banyarwanda became ideal candidates for political promotion. The most successful of these was Barthélémy Bisengimana, who in 1969 came to direct the Bureau of the Presidency of the Republic, a post he held for eight years. Bisengimana became 'the godfather' of all Banyarwanda, but 'especially of Tutsi who legally or illegally [had] come to live in Zaire' (Willame 1997: 53). His main achievement was to make the Political Bureau of the MPR, Zaire's then sole political party, adopt a law in 1972 through which everyone of Rwandan or Burundian origin established in Kivu before 1 January 1950, and who had lived there uninterruptedly, was entitled to citizenship. This new law did not solve the problem of the Tutsi '59-ers', nor indeed that of the assisted migrants who had arrived between 1950 and 1955, but their presence in Zaire ceased to be a point of public debate. 11 The new legislation, however, harmed the interests of North Kivu's autochthonous groups, especially Nyanga and Hunde, who overnight had been turned into minority groups.

Bisengimana's influence with Mobutu enabled the increasingly prosperous Banyarwanda not only to retake the lands lost in 1964, but also to acquire important new lands. Protected *and zaïrois*, the Banyarwanda elite bought into an economy where new riches awaited. In this, they were greatly helped by the land law passed in 1973, known as the Bakajika law, which legalised private ownership. At this point, Zaire had already launched its 'authenticity' campaign, through which many foreigners, non-Africans mainly, had had their properties confiscated by the state and transferred to 'authentic' Zaireans. Riding on the crest of authenticity, the Banyarwanda elite acquired up to 90 per cent of the European plantations in Masisi and Rutshuru (see Mafikiri Tsongo 1996).

Certain 'autochthonous' chiefs also took advantage of the new law and sold for personal gain lands that had always been managed under 'customary law'. Their greed, often resulting in landlessness for autochthones, widened the scope for contestation and violence. It was thus that many Banyarwanda Hutu lost the valuable arable land they had cultivated for decades (Reyntjens and Marysse 1996: 50, referring to Bucyalimwe Mararo 1996). Dispossessed, they resettled in Walikale where many, once also robbed of their nationality (1981), would later be murdered by Nyanga militias.

For Banyarwanda, the golden age lasted until 'godfather' Bisengimana lost his political position and influence, and dispossessed Hunde and Nyanga fought to recoup the properties lost since 1972 (Willame 1997: 55). Bisengimana's dismissal coincided with the discourse of authenticity moving up a gear: the 'ex-Rwandans' once again turned 'Rwandans'. The discourse drove a first wedge into the Banyarwanda community: 'Hutu' began to take their distance from 'Tutsi', declaring they themselves were Hutu and zaïrois. But autochthones were not persuaded. Fearing that the (perceived) process of colonisation by Banyarwanda had already gone too far, autochthones did not generally buy the Hutu declaration and pressured central government to annul the 1972 law. The annulment, which came in 1981, hit Banyarwanda hard: a census was announced; they needed to apply for naturalisation. The wider significance of 1981, however, was the context in which it was passed: with elections looming, heightened political struggle easily turned into scapegoating against 'foreigners'.

Crucially, the 1981 annulment sapped the ability of Banyarwanda to exercise political authority on two fronts: within the region *vis-à-vis* autochthones, and internally in terms of lineage and community organisation. The latter decline, the end point of a process already begun in colonial days (Fairhead 1990; Pottier and Fairhead 1991), would make it harder for Banyarwanda to successfully defend their land claims. Without strong lineage heads, Banyarwanda found it difficult to make convincing representations in court (Willame 1997: 60), which meant that autochthonous leaders could now re-assert themselves as the true guardians of the land. Control over land became fully ethnicised and exceedingly aggressive.

Ten years after losing the battle for citizenship, the crisis deepened for Banyarwanda, both Hutu and Tutsi, when the 1992 National Conference (Conférence nationale souveraine, or CNS) excluded their representatives. To some degree, the exclusion reflected the past pro-Mobutu stance of elite Banyarwanda (autochthones were now exceedingly anti-Mobutu), but it was also a backlash for the strong support and sympathy Banyarwanda Tutsi had shown for the cause of the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) in October 1990. Such sympathy and support were understood to mean that Banyarwanda – all Banyarwanda, but Tutsi more than Hutu – identified with Rwanda and should therefore be denied Zairean citizenship indefinitely. Just before the 1992 National Conference, North Kivu's deputy governor expressed the sentiment when declaring:

'Rwanda will have to accept the return of its emigrants instead of letting them roam around the world like Palestinians. History has shown that the Tutsi, ever-eager for power, have long been destabilisers. By all possible means they try to subvert established authority.... The population of the zone of Walikale has elected me to prevent that the zone be invaded by Tutsi...'. (quoted in Vlassenroot 1997: 53)