Introduction

I.1 Methodology

Although Rwanda had been a widely researched country before the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi,[1] scholarship exploded after this catastrophic event. As researchers, many of them young and 'newcomers' to Rwanda studies, flocked to the country, both the quantity and quality of publications steadily increased. Most research centred on understanding the causes and the unravelling of the genocide, its sequels, such as transitional justice and the regional wars, and the new regime's governance – both political and bureaucratic/technocratic. Much of the scholarship was doctoral research, often involving long and thick fieldwork in challenging circumstances caused by a traumatic environment and the limitations imposed by an authoritarian and touchy government. One of the consequences of the massive arrival of the newcomer academics who discovered Rwanda after – and indeed as a result of – the genocide is that the past was looked at predominantly through its lens. This led to 'presentism', that is the hindsight affecting the writing of the country's history. However, veteran researchers Catharine and David Newbury have argued that the genocide should be analysed through an understanding of Rwandan history rather than looking at the past through the lens of the genocide.[2] Likewise, and more generally, Desrosiers and Russell observe that 'the past is understood

[1] A bibliography until the 1980s is offered in M. d'Hertefelt, D. de Lame, *Société, culture et histoire du Rwanda: Encyclopédie bibliographique 1863–1980/87*, Tervuren, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, 1987, 2 vols. A commented bibliography on the period of the Belgian trusteeship can be found in F. Lagarde, *Colonialisme et révolution: Histoire du Rwanda sous la Tutelle*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017, 2 vols; Lagarde also updates *Bibliographies sur le Rwanda* from 1990 onwards on the website of the University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (https://recherche-afriquedesgrandslacs.pantheonsorbonne.fr/publications-recensions/bibliographies-rwanda-f-lagarde).

[2] D. Newbury, C. Newbury, 'Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 105, No. 3, 2000, pp. 832–833.

through the prism of the present' and note the 'tendency to "write history backwards" from present concerns'.[3]

This is what this book sets out to avoid, by attempting to address the past without prior knowledge of the genocide until it occurred. Indeed, contrary to what is often claimed or suggested, the genocide was not inscribed as an inexorable event in the *longue durée* of Rwanda's history. I will show that some of these historical evolutions have been path dependent, while others occurred at critical junctures. Sometimes they were a combination of both. As shown by Capoccia and Kelemen,[4] periods of path-dependent institutional stability and reproduction are occasionally punctuated by brief phases of institutional flux – referred to as critical junctures – during which more dramatic change is possible. They define critical junctures as '*relatively* short periods of time during which there is a *substantially* heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome'.[5] A key element of the analysis of critical junctures is contingency, which addresses the question of 'what happened in the context of what could have happened'.[6] The combination of path dependency and critical junctures will be highlighted throughout this book.

As can be seen elsewhere as well, history writing in Rwanda is not merely about the past but it also very much constitutes a contemporary political stake. To quote Desrosiers and Russell again, 'the past is not only a prologue but is a very lively part of the present'.[7] It is even more than that, having become an oft-exploited ideological tool. At crucial critical junctures – such as the 1959 revolution and the 1990–1994 civil war, which ended with the genocide and the seizure of power by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) – history has been produced by conflict parties in very different, even opposite, fashions as it suited their respective positions. Examples of divergent readings will be given later in this book, but one instance of 'Hutu' versus 'Tutsi' presentations is useful at this stage.[8] In the early 1990s, one could read on the 'Hutu' side that 'Rwandan society […] has always presented itself under the form of three distinct ethnic groups. Since the existence of centralised state structures of power, the Tutsi ethnic group has dominated

[3] M.-E. Desrosiers, A. Russell, 'Histories of Authority in the African Great Lakes: Trajectories and Transactions', *Africa*, Vol. 90, No. 5, 2020, pp. 952, 954.
[4] G. Capoccia, R. D. Kelemen, 'The Study of Critical Junctures: Theory, Narrative, and Counterfactual in Historical Institutionalism', *World Politics*, Vol. 59, 2007, p. 341.
[5] Ibid., p. 348. Italics in the original text.
[6] Ibid., p. 355.
[7] Desrosiers, Russell, 'Histories of Authority', p. 967.
[8] 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' are put between inverted commas as this generalisation hides the fact that the ethnic categories (on which more later) are not monolithic and that other identities are present. That said, 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' discourses are articulated by elites, particularly in periods of crisis, and they are recognisable as such.

the two other groups, the Hutu and the Twa.'[9] The 'Tutsi' reading was that 'these three groups constitute a single and same ethnic group rather than three different ethnicities'.[10] Both these positions are ideological and, as is often the case, they are in part true and in part false.

Competing and politicised historical narratives have engendered a great deal of polarisation in the political world, civil society, the media and even in academia.[11] This has led to those expressing themselves on Rwandan history to be placed in 'camps', generally in favour of or against the RPF or pro or anti Tutsi or Hutu. This book will attempt to avoid that pitfall, by only adhering to facts around which there is a large scholarly consensus or, when that is not the case, by presenting competing narratives (while taking or not taking a position on them). In so doing, facts and their interpretation will be distinguished.

What differentiates this book from earlier Rwandan historiography is its attempt to cover the entire approximately 150-year period during which modern Rwanda became what it is today. The work that comes the closest to this endeavour is René Lemarchand's seminal *Rwanda and Burundi*,[12] which, however, after a historical survey, mainly addresses the revolution and the first years of independence. Also seminal is Jan Vansina's *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*,[13] which covers precolonial Rwanda, as does David Newbury's *The Land beyond the Mists*,[14] for the lands on both sides of Lake Kivu. Like this book, Alexis Kagame's *Abrégé* starts in the mid nineteenth century but ends with the first republic,[15] and his writing is strongly influenced by the author's proximity to the royal court. My own *Pouvoir et droit au Rwanda* addresses the period from the Belgian presence to the end of the first republic.[16] Bernard

[9] Extract of the political programme of the Coalition pour la Défense de la République (CDR), extremist Hutu party, March 1992.

[10] Communauté rwandaise de France, 'Mémorandum sur le crise politique actuelle au Rwanda', December 1990, p. 4.

[11] On polarisation in academia, see J. Fisher, 'Writing about Rwanda since the Genocide: Knowledge, Power and "Truth"', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2015, pp. 134–145; B. Chemouni, 'La recherche sur l'État rwandais en débat', *Politique africaine*, No. 160, 2020, pp. 17–22.

[12] R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, London, Pall Mall Press, 1970.

[13] J. Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

[14] D. Newbury, *The Land beyond the Mists: Essays on Identity and Authority in Precolonial Congo and Rwanda*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2009.

[15] A. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'histoire du Rwanda de 1853 à 1972*, Butare, Editions universitaires du Rwanda, 1975. This volume followed A. Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethnohistoire du Rwanda*, Butare, Editions universitaires du Rwanda, 1972, which covers the years up to the accession of Rwabugiri.

[16] F. Reyntjens, *Pouvoir et droit au Rwanda: Droit public et évolution politique, 1916–1973*, Tervuren, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, 1985.

Lugan's *Histoire du Rwanda*,[17] as its subtitle suggests, covers a very long period from prehistory to the 1990s and for that reason remains very general and descriptive. The *History of Rwanda*, written on behalf of the governmental National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), is an extensive (726 pages) treatment of Rwanda's entire history.[18] While granting some concessions to the regime's narrative, it is a useful source. Bachmann's recent *History of Rwanda* tends to render the current regime's 'soft' version of some controversial issues.[19] Other works cover specific and limited historical periods, such as the reign of King Musinga,[20] the German period,[21] the run-up to, unravelling and sequels of the 1959 revolution,[22] the period of the Belgian mandate,[23] or the 'Hutu Republics',[24] to quote just a few, in addition to histories written from a missionary or administrative perspective.[25]

Given both its broad temporal scope and its analytical dimension, this book therefore aspires to cover ground hitherto uncovered in the literature on Rwanda. Many of the facts presented here are known, and most are uncontested. Presenting them in an orderly and succinct fashion is useful in itself, but what this book adds to the existing literature is the presentation and analysis of events in a *longue durée* framework, with a focus on continuities and breaks, whereby constancy outnumbers change, even at moments of dramatic transition. The ambition is nevertheless limited. By presenting facts and analysing them, the book aims at proposing a rational understanding of a historical evolution marked by a great deal of violence, both in a distant past and contemporaneously, and that has given rise to considerable debate. It is hoped that this presentation offers material for more detached conversations and further exploration of Rwanda's political journey based on common ground.

[17] B. Lugan, *Histoire du Rwanda: De la préhistoire à nos jours*, s.l., Bartillat, 1997.
[18] National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, *History of Rwanda: From the Beginning to the End of the Twentieth Century*, Kigali, 2016.
[19] K. Bachmann, *A History of Rwanda: From the Monarchy to Post-genocidal Justice*, London–New York, Routledge, 2023.
[20] A. Des Forges, *Defeat Is the Only Bad News: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.
[21] W. R. Louis, *Ruanda-Urundi 1884–1919*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963.
[22] D. Murego, *La révolution rwandaise 1959–1962: Essai d'interprétation*, Louvain, Publications de l'Institut des sciences politiques et sociales, 1976.
[23] J. Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le régime du mandat belge (1916–1931)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1992.
[24] M.-E. Desrosiers, *Trajectories of Authoritarianism in Rwanda: Elusive Control before the Genocide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023.
[25] For a missionary perspective, see L. de Lacger, *Ruanda*, Kabgayi, 1959; for an administrative perspective, see *Historique et chronologie du Ruanda*, s.l., s.d. (1955).

This book has (at least) two limitations. First, in line with Rwandan historiography in the past, it focuses on the central political level. Referring to the writing of precolonial history, David Newbury noted that this bias towards central institutions leads to a skewed presentation of a more complex reality: 'Central court allegiance and local cultural affinities were seldom aligned.'[26] As information came predominantly from court sources, '[o]fficial accounts present Rwandan history as exclusively the history of kings'.[27] Newbury could have issued a similar warning with regard to Rwanda's colonial and postcolonial historiography where the periphery is largely absent. Noting that 'politics have often been removed from rural life and agricultural practices separated from political life',[28] he and Cathy Newbury proposed 'a reunion of [central politics and rural experiences], too long separated: providing a rural dimension to conventional history and a historical dimension to rural studies, bringing politics into the understanding of peasants'.[29] Given that the vast majority of Rwandans have been, and still are today, rural dwellers, one cannot but agree with the Newburys. However, precisely because of the bias they observe and denounce, only very limited research is available on local, rural, dynamics.[30] Only after the genocide did a wealth of field scholarship conducted on Rwanda's thousand hills become available, quite paradoxically in a very constrained research environment. However, this does not offer the material needed for the comparative presentation necessary in the *longue durée* approach attempted here. This book therefore privileges the central political arena, with only some inroads in peripheral experiences.

The second limitation is in a way linked to the first one. This is first and foremost a political history, with only occasional attention for socio-economic issues. It is a choice made on the basis of both my expertise and the limited availability of information on that topic.

[26] Newbury, *The Land beyond the Mists*, p. 5.
[27] Ibid., p. 15.
[28] Newbury, Newbury, 'Bringing the Peasants Back In', p. 833.
[29] Ibid., p. 876.
[30] There are exceptions though, such as, in addition to journal articles, P. Leurquin, *Le niveau de vie des populations rurales au Ruanda-Urundi*, Louvain-Paris, Nauwelaerts, 1960; P. B. Gravel, *Remera: A Community in Eastern Rwanda*, The Hague, Mouton, 1968; C. Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860–1960*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1988; A. Hanssen, *Le désenchantement de la cooperation: Enquête au pays des mille coopérants*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989; F. Bézy, *Rwanda 1962–1989, bilan socio-économique d'un régime*, Louvain, Institut d'Etudes du Développement, 1990; D. de Lame, *A Hill among a Thousand: Transformations and Ruptures in Rural Rwanda*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, and, by addressing popular oral culture, P. Smith, *Le récit populaire au Rwanda*, Paris, Armand Collin, 1975.

Apart from macro technical data on economic output, educational and health facilities, and physical infrastructure, there is little analysis of socio-economic data during the colonial period and the two 'Hutu' republics. Again, this changed to some extent after the genocide, when for instance land and agricultural policies, as well as poverty, health and education, were more closely studied. Like with regard to local dynamics, this however does not allow for the drawing of lines along the *longue durée* pursued in this book.

A last preliminary remark concerns the organisation of this book. While its broad construction is chronological and proceeds from one period to the next, within chapters it is predominantly thematic. Chapter 7, which deals with the post-genocide period, is exclusively thematic. Dealing with the present, it takes the form of a contemporary chronicle. A thematic feature along the entire book is the attention for continuities and breaks in this 150-year history. Continuities can be found in authoritarianism and the concentration of power, intra-regime conflict, the salience of ethnicity, the nature of the state, and the role of ideology and historical narrative. A continuity that bridges the precolonial period and the post-genocide era is the strong elite belief in exceptionalism, invincibility, political power, military might and excellence. Breaks are apparent in the role of the military, both as an organisation and a producer and disseminator of ethical values and norms, and the role and use of ethnicity as a political tool.

I.2 A Brief Look at Pre-mid Nineteenth-Century History

As this book starts in the middle of the nineteenth century, a brief outline of what preceded is necessary. Much of Rwanda's history is mythical, from the first king (*mwami*) Kigwa, who descended from heaven and started organising the realm. Gihanga, one of Kigwa's successors known as the creator, is said to have had three sons, Gahutu, Gatutsi and Gatwa. He entrusted each of them with a jar of milk for safekeeping. Gatwa drank the milk, Gahutu spilled it during his sleep, Gatutsi kept it intact. The next morning, Gihanga rewarded Gatutsi for his performance by making him the ruler over his brothers.[31] Thus the three ethnic groups, Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, were born.[32] In the Rwandan mythico-history, the

[31] A similar myth of origin exists in Ankole; see M. Doornbos, *Not All the King's Men: Inequality as a Political Instrument in Ankole, Uganda*, The Hague, Mouton Publishers, 1978, p. 20.

[32] A brief explanation of the notion of 'ethnic group' is in order here. The usual anthropological definition refers to groupings of people sharing attributes that distinguish them from other groups. Attributes commonly proposed include common traditions,

genealogy of kings proposed by those who trace the dynasty back to the eleventh century is 'purely imaginary', a 'fairy tale'.[33]

The reality is that, despite many publications during the colonial period, little is known about Rwanda's precolonial history. D'Hertefelt noted that most of the ethno-historical literature 'contains interpretations of sources, their reinterpretation, or reinterpretations of reinterpretations'.[34] For his part, Rennie warned against the concordant views of influential authors like Pagès, Kagame or de Lacger: the unity of their interpretation can be explained by the fact that their works were all 'based on court traditions and the fact that there was a certain "intellectual consensus" among missionary historians'.[35] The warning of Claudine Vidal against oral historiography, which is in reality an ideological literature of the royal court, is worth reminding: 'Rather than the history of a state born out of successively resolved contradictions, this knowledge appears as the expression of a pre-established model which events only incarnate and confirm. Everything happens as if (…) the only sense the guardians of oral traditions find in history is its correspondence with the model that is theirs.'[36] As will be made clear later, this idealised official historiography explains the references to an eternal 'Rwanda' as if it were one homogeneous political and social format throughout the area associated with the contemporary state. However, this vision hides the diversity and contingency that marked political institutions and social relationships before 1900, and even well into the colonial period. The court ideology, as reflected in the writings until the 1960s and presenting an image of a 'unitary Rwanda', indeed deviated from the reality of most of the area now known as Rwanda.

This summary therefore starts with an era on which some reliable information is available. After a dynastic break, the Nyiginya kingdom

ancestry, language, history, society, nation, religion, custom and area of residence. Under that definition, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa do not qualify as ethnic groups as they share most of these characteristics. As will be seen later, this was a problem faced by international justice when legally qualifying the extermination of the Tutsi in 1994 as genocide. Though the terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' are used in this book, they could be translated more broadly as 'identity groups'.

[33] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, pp. 44, 217. For works tracing the dynasty back to the eleventh century, see Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire*; B. Muzungu, *Histoire du Rwanda pré-colonial*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003; F. Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation: A History of the Military in Rwanda*, Kigali, Fountain Publishers Rwanda, 2009.

[34] M. d'Hertefelt, *Les clans du Rwanda ancien*, Tervuren, Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, 1971, p. 22.

[35] J. K. Rennie, 'The Precolonial Kingdom of Rwanda: A Reinterpretation', *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1972, p. 12.

[36] C. Vidal, 'Anthropologie et histoire; le cas du Ruanda', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, Vol. 43, 1967, pp. 147–148.

emerged in the seventeenth century with the reign of *mwami* Ruganzu Ndori, a conqueror probably coming from Karagwe in current-day Tanzania. Although the official historiography hid the dynastic interruption, Ruganzu Ndori was a usurper from abroad, who created a new dynasty and a new drum, *Kalinga*, to replace the old one, *Rwoga*, which was seized by *mwami* Ntsibura from Bushi (Bunyabungo), who occupied the country for eleven years, and was destroyed.[37] This was the beginning of a centuries-long evolution, but reliable and detailed information on Rwanda's history became available only from the mid eighteenth century.[38] However, enough is known about the previous period to allow Vansina to write that under *mwami* Ruganzu Ndori the army – an innovation that he created – along with the *ubuhake* clientship system (discussed later in the chapter), became the foundation of power in the kingdom. While the Nyiginya kingdom was but one of the many that emerged in the Great Lakes region during the seventeenth century, in the course of the eighteenth century it became very different from its neighbours when non-territorial, multiple and permanent armies were put in place under the authority of a single military commander.[39] The monarchy then took shape, linking military expansion with political centralisation. King Rujugira (reign ca. 1770–ca. 1786) structured the armies by installing them in permanent camps near the most threatened borders. Two thirds of these armies were created during his reign and that of Rwabugiri, roughly between 1770 and 1895.[40] This was the period of the 'great expansion'.[41]

The deepest effect of this new military organisation was 'the institutionalisation of a glorification of militarism and martial violence that finally permeated the whole of Nyiginya culture as the armies became the foundation of the administrative structure of the realm. (…) [U]ltimately, all the inhabitants of the realm were incorporated in the military organisation.'[42] The army constituted the administrative

[37] E. Mworoha, *Peuples et rois de l'Afrique des Lacs*, Dakar–Abidjan, Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1977, p. 94; L. de Heusch, *Le Rwanda et la civilisation interlacustre*, Brussels, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Institut de Sociologie, 1966, pp. 118–120.
[38] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, p. 52; J.-P. Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*, New York, Zone Books, 2003, p. 159.
[39] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda,* p. 196; de Heusch, *Le Rwanda*, p. 127.
[40] Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa*, pp. 160–161.
[41] National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, *History of Rwanda*, pp. 81–98.
[42] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, pp. 61–62. However, most people in the territory now defined as 'Rwanda' were either outside the domain of court power or only intermittently subjected to military requisitions. Many regions resisted court intrusions until well into the colonial period (as shown later).

framework of royal court rule, and the concentration of power in the hands of the military commanders was an essential step in the consolidation of court power.[43] The RPF military historian Rusagara noted that 'it is the military that played the most central socio-political role in what became of Rwanda'.[44]

Vansina also finds that the recruitment and indoctrination of *intore* (chosen young men serving as soldiers) from about ten years of age 'favoured [the] exaltation of violence, imposture, and the right of the strongest that became the universal theme of all literary and choreographic artistic forms'.[45] Although his book is replete with the 'fairy tales' denounced by Vansina, Sebasoni, an early RPF ideologue, states that *itorero*, where the *intore* were trained, was the 'crucible of chiefs and warriors', 'a military school of sorts'.[46] By the end of the eighteenth century, the part of Rwanda under the reach of central court power was characterised by 'utter militarisation': the military machine included some thirty armies with about 12,000 combatants.[47] While state making has been violent in many places across the world,[48] the role played by the armies in Rwanda had been unique among the kingdoms in the region.

Under these cultural, logistical and institutional conditions it is not surprising that the history of the kingdom is coterminous with war and violence, at least for those areas targeted by the Nyiginya court or administered by its delegates. The current official historical narrative is based on the notion of continuous war and conquest, *ku-aanda* ('from which Rwanda derives its name'[49]), literally 'expansion or spreading out from the centre': 'the principle of *ku-aanda*, which involved annexation and subsequent integration of neighbouring territories, informed the continued expansion and growth of pre-colonial Rwanda'.[50] All the kings mentioned by Rusagara are warrior kings, and the 'Map of *Ku-aanda*' includes large parts of present-day Uganda and the Democratic Republic

[43] Ibid., p. 78.
[44] Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, back cover. I must make it clear that I do not quote Rusagara on a par with scientific historians but because he articulates the historical narrative of the current regime.
[45] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, p. 62. Vansina adds in a footnote: 'Today this literary glorification of violence persists, and it is a particularly nefarious legacy of the ancestral heritage' (p. 246).
[46] S. Sebasoni, *Les origines du Rwanda*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2000, pp. 59–60.
[47] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, p. 123.
[48] C. Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, T. Skocpol (Eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 169–191.
[49] Rusagara, *Resilience of a Nation*, p. xvi.
[50] Ibid., p. 1.

of Congo (DRC).[51] Kagame quotes the saying 'Rwanda attacks, it cannot be attacked' (*Urwanda ruratera, ntiruterwa*) attributed to King Rujugira.[52] More recent Rwandan scholarship insists on the need for the kingdom to conquer and expand in order to politically and socially increase the number of subjects, who became taxpayers, economic producers and army members. Power was associated with reigning over a large number of people.[53]

Even the largely mythical narrative proposed by Kagame is a long litany of wars against neighbours, conquests, punitive expeditions against unruly regions, reprisal attacks, insurrections and their repression, and civil wars. Violence was not only directed towards external enemies and internal opposition, it was also a frequent occurrence within the court and among ruling circles. Kagame's list of royal succession struggles, massacres of entire princely families and those of chiefs whose loyalty was in doubt, rumour mongering and revenge, poisoning and cruel torture, executions, score settling and so on is near endless.[54] Struggles at the top of the state were by no means exceptional, as most successions in Rwanda's history have been violent and sometimes led to outright civil war. An uncontested accession to the drum was such a rare event that when it occurred in 1786, with Ndabarasa succeeding his father Rujugira in an orderly fashion, the latter's sons were called *Abatangana*, 'those who agree with each other'.[55] However, after Ndabarasa's death in 1796, civil war again broke out when his sons violently clashed over the succession.[56] Vansina notes that from the reign of Rujugira in the late eighteenth century onwards 'the country was almost continually in a state of war'.[57]

Despite the internal and external violence, or perhaps due to it, the political organisation of the country had stabilised by the mid nineteenth century, considered here as the beginning of 'modern' Rwanda.

[51] Ibid., p. 208. In November 1996, at the beginning of the first Congo war, Rwandan president Bizimungu showed a map to the media. On it, 'Greater Rwanda' included large parts of eastern DRC. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, Rwanda was smaller rather than larger than it is today (see e.g. G. Mathys, 'Bringing History Back In: Past, Present, and Conflict in Rwanda and the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo', *Journal of African History*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2017, pp. 470–475).
[52] Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire*, p. 137. A former holder of high office told me that this saying is regularly recited in conversations between President Kagame and top military officers.
[53] C. Kabwete Mulinda, R. Nkaka, 'The Political Vision of the Rwandan Kingdom', *Rwanda Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2017, p. 64.
[54] Kagame, *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire*.
[55] Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda*, p. 107.
[56] Ibid., p. 109.
[57] Ibid., p. 75.