



Photo by Johan Hall.

Archaeology and the Construction of Identities in Past and Present Rwanda.

Master thesis in archaeology.

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Chapter 1: Introduction.

1.1 The political history of Rwanda.

In 1892 the Austrian explorer and geographer Oscar Baumann entered Rwanda as the first European. Two years later the Prussian officer Gustav Adolf traveled to Rwanda and met with King Kigeri 4 Rwabugiri (who reigned from 1853 to 1895). From then on German colonial presence increased and lasted until the end of World War 1, when Belgium became the new colonial administrators of Rwanda. At that time Yuhi 5 Musinga (1896-1931) was the king of Rwanda. Even though he at times took advantage of the colonial power's military capacity in order to conquer neighboring king- and chiefdoms, he was known to oppose the European presence. Because of his unwillingness to cooperate with the Belgian administrators he was dethroned and replaced by his son, Mutara 3 Rudahigwa (1931-1959). Throughout the colonial years, the Belgians relied on the king and appointed chiefs to carry out the colonial orders and be their link to the Rwandan people.

The monarchic institution may date as far back in time as the 15th century and the kingdom encountered by the Europeans showed, to them, an almost incomprehensible complexity. This was explained by the nature of the Batutsi,¹ one of the three groups said to inhabit Rwanda, who the Europeans quickly proclaimed as a superior "Caucasoid" race. Hence, upon the colonizing of Rwanda Batutsi were given a privileged position in society and were exempt from many of the demands brought on the rest of the population, i.e. the majority Bahutu. A racial division with political consequences for Bahutu and Batutsi created an environment of separateness and hostility, which preceding and following the 1962 independence led to violent attacks – mainly on Batutsi targeted by Bahutu. Thousands of Batutsi fled Rwanda from the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. During the 1980s some of the second-generation Batutsi refugees formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in Uganda as a reaction towards Banyarwanda being denied citizenship in Uganda as well as the possibility of returning to Rwanda.² October 1 1990 marks the beginning of the Rwandan civil war, when the RPF invaded Rwanda. Three years of civil war, with periods of unorganized "killing-sprees" on Rwandan Batutsi by Bahutu-extremists, led in turn to negotiations between the RPF and the Rwandan government then controlled by President Juvenal

¹ I will use the Kinyarwanda terms for Hutu and Tutsi; Mututsi/Muhutu" (sing.), and Batutsi/Bahutu (pl.) throughout the thesis.

² This affected all Rwandan refugees or immigrants, hence the term Banyarwanda. However, it was the Batutsi first- and second-generation refugees who were not welcome in Rwanda.

Habyarimana.³ The main issues in these negotiations were the power sharing within the Broad-based Transitional Government that was to be established and the return of Batutsi refugees to Rwanda. The negotiations were never completed as Habyarimana's plane was shot down over Kigali April 6 1994 by unknown culprits. This marked the beginning of 100 days of genocide, which left between 800.000 and 1 million people dead – mainly Batutsi. The RPF seized control over Kigali in July 1994, but killings continued in the rural areas of Rwanda throughout August.

One of the leaders of RPF, Paul Kagame, is currently the President of Rwanda. His government has faced enormous challenges in uniting Rwandans in the aftermath of genocide. In addition to dealing with the more practical problems caused by the violence, such as infrastructure, poverty, identifying and punishing *génocidaires*, the divisive nature of the identities Bahutu and Batutsi has been addressed. Official discourse claims that in order to create the foundation for coexistence and peace in Rwanda, the identities of Bahutu and Batutsi have to be put aside and replaced by a national identity – the Banyarwanda. It is stressed that Rwandans are one people and have been so in pre-colonial times. Divisive ethnic identities are seen as a colonial legacy Rwandans have to free themselves of.

1.2 The aims of the thesis.

The abovementioned political contexts are the framework of this thesis, because of the diverse interpretations and uses of the past they entail. In the tradition of post-processual archaeology, it has been acknowledged and emphasized that archaeology is not an isolated, objective discipline. The questions asked by archaeologists and the way their material is interpreted and used are connected to the society at large. Archaeological knowledge is constructed and knowledge is, as we know, power. Hence, the political aspects of archaeological knowledge production are inevitable (Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Shepherd 2002:190). When addressing political aspects of archaeology throughout this thesis, I discuss the political motivations and effects of interpreting the past in a certain manner, be it in the context of colonialism, social revolution, genocide or current nation-building. The past does not exist as an objective reality; it is continuously constructed and reconstructed so as to make it meaningful and usable in the

³ Habyarimana was the official head of state, but it has been claimed that his wife Agathe Habyarimana, who was arrested in France as I write this (March 5 2010), was the one who in reality controlled government affairs together with friends and family from her home region in the north. Agathe and her accomplices were referred to as the *akazu*, meaning “the little house”, and were known and feared because of their planning of the genocide.

present. Several versions of past events coexist and it is not my aim in this thesis to decide which version is “correct”. Rather, I will discuss the mechanisms that make one version of the past officially accepted, celebrated and institutionalized, and I will look at these mechanisms and choices in relation to specific political projects. I hope that this will contribute to an understanding of the flexibility of archaeology, the discipline’s relations to the society it is conducted and/or interpreted in, and the consequences and explosiveness of certain archaeological interpretations.

The main research questions that I build the thesis’ discussions on are: 1.) In what ways have notions of the past been used in the political contexts of colonialism, independence and nation-building in Rwanda? 2.) How have changing political contexts affected the perception of Bahutu, Batutsi and their relationship? 3.) In what ways and to what extent are archaeology and constructions of the past a part of post-genocide Rwanda? The selection of these main points of discussion is largely due to the fact that in Rwanda, the political effects of choosing specific versions of the past as parts of the national narrative have been extreme violence. That is not to say that all conflicts in Rwanda have been caused by interpretations of the past. Rather, the conflicts may to a large degree be attributed to divisions within the Rwandan population, which have been manipulated by political actors in order to maintain certain structures of power. These divisions have largely been constructed by references to varying versions of the past, many of them concerned with Iron Age migrations, conquests, and the formation of the Rwandan kingdom. From early colonial times and up until the genocide in 1994, it was politically relevant to establish some “facts” concerning the origin of Bahutu and Batutsi, their past relation to each other, and their contribution to the process of ancient state formation, because these “facts” could legitimize and naturalize the contemporary organization of Rwandan society.

As the third research question implies, I would like to emphasize that the political uses of the past is of no less importance today: the construction of national identities is inevitably linked to the past, and in the context of post-genocide and anti-divisionism “new” versions and interpretations of past events have to be constructed and transmitted to the public. The official discourse concerning the Rwandan past, both ancient and recent, is here seen as an important part of the peace and reconciliation process. In this context I refer to the peace and reconciliation process as coming to terms with past events, presenting them in a manner that prevents divisions among Rwandans, and finding “common grounding” that can inspire to a

shared, national identity. In this thesis I see museums and genocide memorials as sites reflecting and institutionalizing the official discourse. The kind of identities that these sites may contribute to construct, and these identities' place in a post-genocide society, will be an important part of the discussion in chapter 6. In this chapter I will also compare the choices made at museums and memorials in Rwanda, and hence the messages they are transmitting to the public, with those made at Uganda National Museum and Kasubi Royal Tombs in Uganda. The reason for the comparison is mainly to get an impression of how given political histories and agendas influence what and how material is displayed in a museum setting. Uganda has been chosen for this comparison because its pre-colonial past resembles that of Rwanda, especially regarding the formation of kingdoms, developments of economic specializations and a social distinction between agriculturalists and pastoralists. In addition, both of the countries have experienced political struggles, civil war and ethnic violence in the years following their independence. However, an important difference is that Rwanda's history includes genocide. While northern part of Uganda has experienced extreme violence, this is not officially recognized as genocide, at least not by the current government.

Chapter 4 deals with the separation of Bahutu and Batutsi; the nature of and arguments for the distinction, and the diverse political motivations behind these. Theories concerning the formation of the Rwandan kingdom are discussed with reference to archaeological research conducted in the colonial years and up until present day. I stress that I do not find it relevant, or even possible, for me to present one of these theories as archaeologically "correct". Rather than making conclusions on the Rwandan Iron Age, I aim at showing how the past may be transformed when used to back up differing political claims, how this has affected the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi, and the status and roles associated with them.

In chapter 5 I will discuss the use of the past in extremist propaganda, starting with the Social Revolution in 1959. The events leading up to the time of independence have been extremely important in shaping the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi, mainly by the emphasis put on racial stereotypes and the moral qualities associated with them. The Social Revolution marked the early victimization of Batutsi, the explicit argumentation for their inherent thirst for power and oppression of Bahutu, and the increasing call for Bahutu solidarity and power. These were elements of anti-Batutsi propaganda for decades, and were drawn upon by media in the years preceding and during the genocide. In propaganda, the premises for the

distinction were seen as the same as in colonial times, but I will show that their connotations were inverted and reinterpreted in the face of a changed political reality.

Throughout the thesis I refer to “the past” to a greater extent than I refer to “archaeology”. This is because “the past” comprises events from the Iron Age and up until yesterday, which we have knowledge of through diverse disciplines such as archaeology, history, anthropology, political science and sociology, to mention some. “Archaeology” on the other hand, implies a much narrower use – it refers strictly to the knowledge deduced from material remains of the past. It also implies an *ancient* past, which is not the only scope of this thesis. Rather, it is concerned with the present uses and interpretations of past events, including those which we have knowledge of due to archaeological research. Hence, I see archaeology as one of the many disciplines which provide us with knowledge of the past. Because of the limited archaeological research in Rwanda I have found it necessary and more fruitful to add information collected within other disciplines when discussing the Rwandan past.

Chapter 2: Theories and methods.

2.1 Theoretical considerations.

The theme of this thesis is the political aspects of archaeology; both the influence a given, political situation has on archaeological research and performance, and the sometimes more subtle ways that archaeology may be incorporated in actual conflicts. “Truths” concerning the prehistory and history of a country, a people or both have been drawn upon as arguments in such widely different contexts as The Third Reich’s idea of a superior race, the Jews’ claim to a country the Bible proved to be theirs, and the Rwandan Bahutu’s claim to be the country’s indigenous population and hence its rightful rulers. What makes the past such a potent argument in conflicts and why is it an inevitable part of a nation-state?

Most, if not all, ethnic groups have to relate to a nation-state – a relationship which is often conflict prone as a consequence of the two terms’ nature. While “ethnic group” denotes a group of people who relate to each other by means of cultural similarities, shared values and sometimes origin (or the *idea* of a common origin), and perhaps most importantly because they *feel like* members of the ethnic group and act accordingly (Barth 1969), the nation-state

could be seen as a geographical, political and judicial term first and foremost (Lindholm 1993). However, the nation-state is also about cultural homogeneity and feelings of belongingness.⁴ If this latter view is predominant, it is highly likely that ethnic groups will be in conflict with the nation-state, because of the latter's claim to cultural homogeneity and hence exclusion of the cultural expression of ethnic groups. According to Lindholm (1993:3-5), an alternative view exists that may be more accommodating towards ethnic groups: when the nation is defined according to citizenship, instead of cultural or ethnic identity, all the people living within the nation's geographical boundaries belong to the nation-state. However, both views may be used interchangeably.

What is important in a nation-state is that all its inhabitants feel committed to it – sometimes to such an extent that they are willing to die for it. A society in which all members participate and carry their lot is likely to be a well-functioning society. In order to achieve this, some illusions must be created and imposed on the nation-state's population, because the nation-state with its boundaries and random inhabitants is a construction in itself and in most cases a quite modern one. One of these illusions is the construction of what Anderson (2006:6) has termed “imagined communities”: “It [the nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. It is important to note that Anderson is here referring to the nation, not the nation-state. It is sentiments that form the nation, and this might be said to be the premise of the nation-state. According to Billig, nationalism seems to naturalize the modern world order: “(...) nationalism is the ideology by which the world of nations has come to seem the natural world – as if there could not possibly be a world without nations” (Billig 1995:37). He also argues that a national identity is seen as natural and unforgettable – partly because we are reminded of it every day through subtle signs in our surroundings (Billig 1995). Hence, our national identity is something we very rarely question.

In the same way that ethnicity is sometimes perceived as primordial, so is the national identity – it is a part of you that is very difficult to ignore or change. How is the nation integrated in our identity and what are the consequences of this? The legitimacy of the nation-state rests partly on the claim it has on its own past, which is achieved by “proving” the traditions it is

⁴ The term “nation” denotes the cultural collectivity of the nation-state.

built upon. According to Kohl, nationalists tend to make use of archaeological cultures associated with the ethnic group emphasized in the nationalism: “Such identifications provide the nationality in question with a respectable pedigree extending back into the remote past, firmly rooted in the national territory; land and people are united” (Kohl 1998:239). By drawing a line of continuance from “time immemorial”, the nation-state becomes naturalized and exclusionary. As the citation above shows, the nation-state is also concerned with “tying” its inhabitants to the geographical area it comprises. This process leads according to Østigård (2001:27) to a struggle over the national narrative concerning the past.

Anderson proposes that nations have a past that stretches further back in time than the actual nation-state: “If nation-states are widely conceded to be “new” and “historical”, the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future” (Anderson 2006:11-12). Hence, nationalism has to be understood with regards to its cultural roots, which brings me to the theories of Anthony Smith. According to Smith (2004:196), nations “(...) are modeled on, and often develop from, earlier ethnic communities”. He claims that the continuity of ethnicity in nations can be found in the cultural sphere, for example in myth, tradition and memory. If I understand Smith correctly many of the aspects that make up an ethnic identity is transmitted and maintained within a national identity. This is interesting in the Rwandan context as the government encourages a national identity at the expense of what is seen as the “divisive” forces of ethnic identities, while it at the same time emphasizes a glorious, royal history – untainted by conflicts and the representative of good, traditional values. However, we may ask ourselves who this version of the royal history belongs to; Bahutu or Batutsi? I will address this question later in the thesis, but for now it is worth remembering the ethnic aspects of myth, memory and tradition that Smith claims are often transferred from an ethnic to a national context in the process of nation-building.

Defining the term ethnicity is important in discussing the Rwandan conflict because of the ethnic divisions and solidarities that were created before and after independence. The meaning of the term ethnicity and how it differentiates itself from race has to be explored – Fredrik Barth, amongst others, is important in this regard. Before the 1960s, race and ethnicity had a tendency to merge and be seen as two aspects of the same; both of them were largely understood as objective, biological and primordial qualities. Barth represented a different perspective on ethnicity, which separated the term from race. According to Barth (1969:10),

ethnicity must be understood as relational and contextual above all. Contrary to the dominant view on ethnicity in the first half of the 1900s, the interaction between people and their ability to under- or over-communicate their differences must be taken into consideration. Barth claimed that ethnicity is not something that is created in an isolated environment; rather, it is constructed in the meeting point where people are confronted with each other (Barth 1969). This is where communicating differences and similarities become relevant in order to enable interaction and cooperation. It is an important point that the differences are not “objective” differences, but are made meaningful and relevant by the actors themselves in a specific context (Barth 1969:14). According to Eidheim, cultural features may prove misleading in distinguishing between ethnic groups because they in some cases will appear homogenous, while the population concerned are well aware of their differing ethnic identity; “What perpetuates the axiom of an identity cleavage, then, is the fact that people are able to identify each other as belonging to separate categories on the basis of their performance of any role in the public sphere” (Eidheim 1969:48). From this we may draw the conclusion that ethnic identities are not static and unchangeable – they are to a large degree adaptable to a given situation. This is worth remembering when I later discuss the separation of Bahutu and Batutsi, as they in many cases have been perceived as static, ethnic categories. Applied to the Rwandan situation Barth’s theory might illuminate why it is so difficult to pin-point the exact difference between Bahutu and Batutsi; if we assume that Batutsi and Bahutu are ethnic categories they are likely to have changed over time. The meaning inherent in the categories has been altered to fit new situations and the ethnic identities may have been more or less relevant at different stages in the Rwandan past.

The second aspect of the problem of ethnicity is directly connected to archaeology: is it possible to draw conclusions about ethnicity by interpreting material culture? In what ways is ethnicity archaeologically visible? Archaeologists influenced by the cultural historical paradigm claimed that variations and changes in the archaeological material could be seen as manifestations of different ethnic groups. In the early 1900s it was commonly assumed that material culture equaled races of people, but throughout the 1950s archaeologists such as Childe questioned the kind of information material culture could provide about the people who produced them (Hodder 1982:3). The processual archaeology of the 1960s offered to a certain extent an alternative framework, within which variations in material cultures were interpreted as functional or ecological adaptations. Research conducted in the 1950s and 1960s were affected by World War 2 and the racist propaganda that had flourished within

archaeology – especially in research conducted by the German archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna. Kossinna sought to map out the distribution of Germanic tribes using distributions of material culture as guidelines. In his theories race, ethnicity and material culture were combined in a manner not very unusual for that time, but the consequences it had in the context of war and genocide made it difficult for archaeologists to continue to equal race/ethnic group with archaeological culture (Hodder 1982:2). This hesitancy of discussing the relation between ethnicity and material culture was addressed in Barth's redefinitions of ethnicity in his seminars in Bergen in 1967. This opened the field for discussion to a certain extent, but it was still difficult to conduct research on ethnicity in the early 1970s. The "problem of ethnicity" presented by Barth was further developed within post-processual archaeology in the 1980s.

Archaeologists working within the post-processual tradition have claimed that it must be remembered that style sometimes is part of an active communication where the makers want to transmit a message by for instance choosing one decoration over another. This element of *choice* is important because it discredits the earlier assumption that material culture passively reflected a social reality. According to Hodder (1982:11), it had been assumed that heterogeneity in culture and style reflected a large degree of interaction between groups of people, and the other way around. In his case studies he found this to be too simplistic: "(...) the extent to which cultural similarity relates, for example, to interaction depends on the strategies and intentions of the interacting groups and on how they use, manipulate and negotiate material symbols as part of those strategies" (Hodder 1982:185). Hodder argues that style may be an indication of ethnic differentiation. However, he also argues that the symbols and concepts that are part of the context in which material culture is produced and made meaningful must be taken into consideration when determining the purpose of stylistic variations.

The possibility of associating an ethnic group with a given set of material culture is extremely difficult because of the very nature of ethnicity; it is flexible, changeable, and may not be given cultural features that are visible in pottery, tools or other material remains. Some groups choose to downplay the differences they have in material culture when confronted with other groups, while others do not articulate ethnic identity through their material culture and are hence in no need to "mute" such differences (Barth 1969). Following Hodder's arguments, we have to ask whether or not the visibility of ethnic markers in material culture reflects a conscious manipulation of the message – a way of telling what you want others to know.

As shown, the archaeological visibility of ethnicity is highly debatable and difficult to get a firm hold on. It is therefore interesting to see how this is solved in the context of a museum: how do museums present ethnic groups or the ethnic aspect of given material remains? I will take a closer look into this problem later in the thesis, but first we have to keep in mind the ideological foundation of museums. Museums were established as arenas of public enlightenment in the 18th and 19th centuries, creating a framework of knowledge for people to relate to. The time of the creation of museums, taking the form we still know today, was also a time when nation-states were founded all over Europe. It seems plausible that the context of, more or less, new social, cultural and political boundaries called for an institutionalization, maintenance and reproduction of knowledge kept within the boundaries (Vestheim 1994:20-21). Earlier in this chapter I wrote about the link between nationalism and the past, and this may be drawn upon also in relation to the foundation of museums. The nation-state needs its citizens to have a somewhat homogenized perspective on what is true and what is false to be able to relate to each other and to the nation-state as efficiently as possible – we have to agree upon some “ground-rules”. The result, I would argue, is a collective memory⁵ comprising selected parts of the past and distinct interpretations of them. The school-system may be said to provide us with this homogenized perspective, but I would argue that the museums do too by emphasizing what is important and relevant parts of our cultural heritage (Østigård 2001:27). As a consequence, museums have a great deal of power regarding how people perceive the world they live in. This implies that the display or non-display of for example ethnicity at museums are potentially important agents in the shaping of people’s perception of ethnicity – both past and present. However, the museums are not in the position of completely *inventing* the knowledge they are presenting; it has to correspond with the reality (Kohl 1998:23), or rather what people understand as the reality, to a certain degree. Otherwise, the museums would risk losing their credibility. Hence, as a “mirror” of its surroundings the museum can give us valuable insight into a given society’s perception of their reality and what parts of this reality they want to transmit to a broader audience.

⁵ The term collective memory refers to Maurice Halbwachs’ observation that memory is usually constructed by individuals as *part of groups*: “(...) it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs 1992:38).

2.2 Methodological approaches.

This thesis is largely based on literature from several fields of study; archaeology, social anthropology, political studies, history, sociology and ethnography. Not all of the chosen literature concerns Rwanda in particular, but I find that a broader perspective is useful when examining the past and present of a country situated in the cultural (and often political and economic) community of the Great Lakes region. When discussing the relationship between nation-states and the past it has been necessary to draw upon general theories – most of the theoretical considerations are not site-specific and I have applied them to the Rwandan (and Ugandan) context as I have found suitable. The literature spans from the early 1900s up until today in order to include past perspectives, for instance colonial, in the discussion of changing identities and transformed perceptions of past events.

In addition to the literature, my fieldwork in Rwanda from August 15 to November 15 2009 creates the foundation of the discussions concerning the political uses of the past in the present context of nation-building. The research in Uganda was conducted during my stay in Kampala from September 22 to October 2 2009. In the three months from August to November I spent a great deal of time at the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (INMR), and was also granted access to the libraries at the National University of Rwanda and at the Center for Conflict Management. All of them are situated in Butare, where I lived. The language barrier posed a problem for me, as most people speak French in addition to Kinyarwanda despite the government's recent decision to replace French with English as official second-language. I could have hired a translator in order to conduct interviews with persons who did not speak English, but after a while I found it unnecessary as I understood that it would hardly make a difference – the questions I wanted to ask were not of the kind that most people would want to openly discuss with a stranger such as myself. The initial plan was to conduct structured interviews with people connected to the museums and the university – mainly the history department, asking them questions about their relation to the past; if, and how it was part of their identity, what they considered to be the main events of the Rwandan past, how they perceived the distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi, and so on. I was hoping to find out whether there was a discrepancy between what we may call an official and an unofficial version of the past.

I was able to conduct some interviews: Professor Paul Rutayisire at the Center for Conflict Management who teaches history at National University of Rwanda, Professor Kanimba

Misago who is Rwanda's only archaeologist and the director of the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda, André Ntagwabira who is a scientific expert at the INMR, and Jackline Nyiracyiza who is a conservator in history and archaeology at Uganda National Museum. These four interviews were conducted in the interviewees' offices, with them talking largely uninterrupted. All of them possessed a lot of knowledge concerning the past and present political situation in Rwanda and Uganda and therefore I did not find it necessary to ask a lot of questions – most of the questions I had prepared were answered unsolicited during our conversations.

In addition to these interviews I had a lot of interesting and informal conversations with Rwandans I met during my stay in Butare. All of them were aware of the reason for my stay in Rwanda and all of them took the initiative to talk about their feelings towards what had happened in Rwanda from colonial times and up until today; the distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi, the purpose of memorials and what it entails being a Rwandan today. These conversations were of the kind that takes place between friends or acquaintances sharing a beer, and are not to be considered as structured interviews. However, they revealed so many interesting aspects of Rwandans' conflicted relationship to their past that were not expressed in the more official interviews, that I wish to incorporate some of them in my discussion of the role of museums and memorials in Rwanda. Because of the nature of the conversations, meaning that they were not conducted as structured interviews, I will not reveal who the persons are in order to secure their anonymity. What I want to draw from the conversations are individual experiences and sentiments, and I want to use them as a reminder of the historical and political ambiguity that exists in peoples' minds. However, it is also worth remembering that the ones who initiated contact with me and wanted to share their experiences often spoke from a certain perspective – they all had stories of victimization to tell. As far as I know I was not approached by genocide suspects or perpetrators who wanted to share their point of view with me. Hence, the conversations I am referring to in this thesis are likely to represent the point of view of officially recognized victims, and not those of perpetrators or non-recognized victims.

The literature, interviews and conversations are combined with museum analysis from both Rwanda and Uganda. By museum analysis I mean the critical observation of a given exhibition and the messages it transmits to a visitor. Before I entered the exhibitions I usually

wrote down what I expected to find based on the knowledge I had acquired on the subject through literature, and later compared these expectations with the material that was put on display and the theme of the exhibition. By comparing expectations and actual material I found it easier to discover “what was missing”, meaning the material not displayed and thus the histories not transmitted. This method was applied to: the National Museum of Rwanda, the Royal Palace in Nyanza, the Kigali Memorial Centre, Murambi Genocide Memorial, Kasubi Royal Tombs in Uganda, and Uganda National Museum. Because of the research questions in this thesis I find the most interesting part of the museum analysis to be the material and histories that are not on display, as well as the material and histories that are correspondingly over-communicated, as this may give a lot of information on what kind of present the authorities’ want to construct through the more or less manipulated past. The analysis was supplemented with my own photographs of the exhibitions, with the exception of the interior of the Royal Palace in Nyanza and the Kigali Memorial Centre as special permission from the Ministry of Sports and Culture was required. I did not assess photographs from these locations to be of such importance for the thesis that I applied for permission.

Chapter 3: A brief history of archaeology in Rwanda.

The history of research in the eastern and central parts of Africa dates back to the mid-1800s, when scholars and amateurs, mainly European, became aware of the time-depth of this area, and the possibilities this gave with regards to acquiring knowledge about the origin of man. As a result of this, the focus of these early studies was the Stone Age, with methods drawn from the fields of geology, archaeology and environmental studies (Robertshaw 1990). Due to the stratigraphical conditions at many of the sites, valuable information about climatic changes in prehistoric times was given, and a tentative chronology of alternating wet and dry interglacial periods could be established. This provided a framework for understanding the sort of conditions early man faced and how he adapted to them: “Not only is it important to know something of the climatic background because of its direct effects on man and his environment, but also because the sequence provides the most valuable means of dating human remains and industries by correlation with other areas” (Cole 1954:35). Stone tools and – in some cases – human remains were dated with reference to the geological deposits they were discovered in. From this, it became clear that the answer to questions about the earliest prehistory, “the dawn of man” we might say, could be found in East Africa. The contributions made in the 19th and 20th century to an understanding of the African prehistory were in many cases valuable, but also inevitably marked by the early stage of archaeology as

a science and the European perspective on Africa in general (Deacon 1990:40). As Sonia Cole wrote in the early 1950s: “In the earliest times, East Africa was by no means the cultural backwater that it became later” (Cole 1954:24), and “(...) it will be apparent that its [East Africa’s] importance lies essentially in the earliest times” (Cole 1954:27).

The preoccupation with African Stone Age has persisted up to this day, but from the late 1950s and the 1960s more research has focused on understanding the African Iron Age, both its technology and its peoples. The Iron Age seems to have been characterized by migrations affecting large parts of the African continent. This has been examined especially by archaeologists and linguists, who have sought to understand the origins of the Bantu languages that came to dominate an area spanning roughly from Nigeria in the northwest to the south of Africa. Several theories have been concerned with the nature of the Bantu-expansions and what they entailed with regards to technology, social organization and food production (see for example de Maret 1990; Hiernaux 1968; Murdock 1959). In the following I will give a brief introduction to some of these theories, as they in various degrees came to be important parts of the construction of identities in Rwanda, both before and after independence.

Writing in the late 1950s, Murdock sought to map out the origins and distribution of Bantu-speaking peoples. He distinguished between several Bantu-groups, based on where they settled, social organization and mode of subsistence; the Northwestern Bantu, the Central Bantu, and the Equatorial Bantu. All of these groups originated from the Cameroon-Nigerian border, where they migrated from around 2000 years ago. Murdock attributed the success of the Bantu to their ability to “absorb” particular cultural elements from the groups they encountered. However, the adoption of Malaysian foodstuffs had to precede the migrations as they provided them with the means to survive by practicing agriculture in the tropical rainforest: “(...) the Northwestern Bantu could not have entered their present habitat until they received the Malaysian food plants – unless, of course, they had reverted to a hunting and gathering economy, a sacrifice which tillers throughout history have invariably refused to make” (Murdock 1959:273). According to Murdock it was probable that the Bantus who migrated into Uganda encountered Cushitic peoples, who practiced a distinct form of agriculture. Some of the Cushitic peoples were organized in what Murdock termed “highly complex states”. He found it likely that the complex state formations that could be observed among more recent Great Lakes peoples had their origins not among the Bantu, but the

Cushites, because the Bantu adopted the Cushitic cereals and possibly the social organization as it was part of the same cultural complex.

The more recent Interlacustrine Bantus were seen as descendants of the Equatorial Bantus, and these were the Bantus who had been in closest contact with Cushitic peoples called the Sidamo in Uganda.⁶ Hence, they had been “Hamiticized” by the Sidamo, who had strong elements of both Caucasoid and Negroid features in their blood: “We lack sufficient evidence, however, to determine how the mixture occurred, whether through early Negro infiltration among Caucasoids after the latter had expelled the Bushmanoids or through later Caucasoid expansion into territory where Negroes had previously displaced the indigenous hunters” (Murdock 1959:187). Murdock stated that this Caucasoid presence in Africa could be traced back to the Upper Paleolithic period. In fact, they were the ones who brought a fully developed Neolithic complex with them when they migrated from southern Ethiopia around 1000 B.C. Assuming that the Bantus did not yet occupy the region at that time, they encountered the Caucasoid form of agriculture and husbandry when they arrived in the Great Lakes Area, and absorbed parts of this culture: “(...) the evidence seems conclusive that the Megalithic Cushites, far from vanishing without a trace, have transmitted a considerable part of their former culture to their Negroid successors and have doubtless also contributed substantially to their genetic composition” (Murdock 1959:199).

Phillipson has concluded with the same probable time and point of origin for the Bantu expansions as Murdock, but has used archaeological material to back up the linguistic evidences. This has led to a division between eastern and western Bantu languages that show different degrees of within group homogeneity (Phillipson 2005:262). Phillipson has argued that especially the Chifumbaze complex (including Urewe sites) may be seen as the signature archaeological culture of eastern Bantu. The dispersal of Chifumbaze culture indicates rapid movement of people, who had knowledge about metalworking and farming. This knowledge was introduced to the indigenous population as they came into contact with Bantu-speaking peoples. However, it must be kept in mind that the knowledge was not readily accepted everywhere and that the indigenous population may have contributed to the developments visible in the archaeological material in a variety of ways (Phillipson 2005:264-265).

⁶ The Sidamos originated in southwest-Ethiopia according to Murdock (1959).

African archaeology has changed a great deal from its beginning up until now, partly because of political transformations in the countries involved. While political unrest and instability restricted archaeological research in Rwanda in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, economical and developmental challenges faced during Habyarimana's regime had the same effect throughout the 1980s (de Maret 1990:131).⁷ However, it must be remembered that African archaeology has also changed in response to new, European paradigms – a result of the fact that archaeological research has largely been carried out by Europeans.

Archaeologists in the early 1900s were influenced by the cultural historical paradigm, which caused variations and changes in the material culture to being explained as markers of, or influence from, different racial or ethnic groups. A good example of this is the way distinct pottery styles and skeletal remains in Rwanda have been attributed to either Bahutu or Batutsi: “Thanks to the Ruli find [a collective burial], something is known of the physical type of the users of B-type ware: they seem to be rather similar to the present-day Hutu” (Nenquin 1971:187). Migration and diffusion were seen as the root causes of changes in the archaeological record up until the 1960s. The 1960s' processual archaeology perceived “(...) culture as an efficient ecological tool (...)” (Olsen 1997:49, my translation), which entailed that changes and variations earlier seen as caused by migration and diffusion now were attributed to ecological adaptations by past societies. This has been exemplified in Schoenbrun's (1998) emphasis on food production/specialization in his discussion on societal and cultural changes, perhaps most importantly the development of social hierarchies, in the Iron Age Great Lakes region. Robertshaw and Taylor (2000) must also be mentioned in this regard, as they have focused on climatic changes in the Iron Age in order to explain why a pastoral and an agricultural specialization seems to have developed around 800-1000 AD. However, migration and diffusion as catalysts of change have not been excluded from the more ecological discussions either. In the more recent discussions this aspect has to a large degree been downplayed, probably as a consequence of the political situation in Rwanda; assumptions concerning migrations and who brought what innovations with them to Rwanda have been a source of many conflicts. In the current context of post-genocide reconciliation and the construction of a strong national identity it might be more suitable to focus on aspects of the past that triggers unity instead of divisions and differences. An example of this is the research conducted by John Giblin, who aims to “collect subsistence data to question whether

⁷ Some research was conducted, amongst others by Nenquin in 1967, Van Grunderbeek in 1983, and Van Noten in the same year.

there is archaeological evidence to support the notion of an economic trichotomy during the Rwandan Iron Age between forager, cultivator and herder” (Giblin 2008:45). The colonial administration claimed different economic specializations for Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi, and subsistence was hence made part of what divided the groups. As Giblin’s research indicates, there is a current need to test the assumptions made by the colonial powers, so as to “clean out” the misrepresentations of Rwandan prehistory and history.

Chapter 4: Contested past events.

This chapter deals with two of the most contested aspects of the Rwandan past: the origin of Bahutu and Batutsi and the events leading to the formation of the Rwandan kingdom. My aim here is to show how the same past events have been interpreted in a variety of ways and how these interpretations are inevitably marked by the political context they are born into. As Østigård (2007:23) states: “Archaeological objects exist physically and represent a past reality. But context and contemporary knowledge determine the pasts that are possible to construct”. The past and present debates concerning the origin and nature of Bahutu and Batutsi, and their respective roles in the development of centralized political institutions give us valuable insight into the processes leading to the construction of archaeological knowledge and the political circumstances that make us readily accept this knowledge as truthful and legitimate.

4.1 The separation of Bahutu and Batutsi.

Several scholars have tried to figure out the nature and origin of the distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi: some have proposed a biological, and hence racial, distinction, while others see the difference as caste-like, socio-economic, ethnic, or a combination of these. The preferred and hegemonic theory has changed from colonial times and up until today, following the political challenges of a specific period and various scientific tendencies.

According to Mamdani (2001:15) the colonial way of administering Rwanda should be seen as a “half way house” between direct and indirect rule rather than one or the other. This needs to be pointed out, as the manner of ruling made a crucial contribution to the colonial identities that were constructed; while a direct rule tended to create a racial distinction between native (the colonized) and settler (the colonizers), an indirect rule tended to favor ethnic divisions. Through indirect rule the category of native was split into several ethnic groups, each with its

“native authority” and “customary law”. In Rwanda, elements from direct and indirect rule were combined: two races were identified among the inhabitants, the non-indigenous Hamites, i.e. Batutsi, and the indigenous Bantu, i.e. Bahutu. The Bantu-Bahutu were also seen as an ethnic group, because of their position as indigenous, and as such subjugated to the customary laws enforced by the native authorities, i.e. by powerful Batutsi (Mamdani 2001:24-28).

Batutsi were favored by the Belgian administrators from the start of their colonial rule, as they were perceived as more European-like than the other Rwandans and therefore better suited to act as intermediaries between the colonial power and the Rwandan population. The Rwandan king and his chiefs were given the authority to act on behalf of the colonial power and make sure that their orders were followed, as a consequence of being seen as belonging to a superior, non-indigenous race. The organizational challenge was how to distinguish between those entitled to privileges, such as political power, and those not. More specifically: how to draw the line between the two main groups inhabiting the colony,⁸ namely Bahutu and Batutsi? Another – more general – problem that the colonial power faced was how to legitimize and naturalize their right to govern. The solution to both of these problems could be found through the use of (then) scientific theories. In this context the Hamitic hypothesis is the most important one, as it has influenced both scholars’ and ordinary peoples’ understanding of race and ethnicity in Rwanda for several decades.

In early colonial times, theories combining theological and racial elements had a large group of supporters. The “Great Chain of Being” theory was an important tool when distinguishing different peoples from each other; the closer a people was to “the home of God”, i.e. Israel, the closer they were to God himself and his angels. Europeans were seen as closer to God than Africans, who were more closely related to animals according to the logic of the “Great Chain of Being” theory (Taylor 1999:39). But some Africans, for example the Batutsi and other peoples who proved to be more “civilized” than what Europeans would expect, were seen as descendants of Israelites. According to advocates of the Hamitic theory, the sons of the biblical figure Ham had been expelled from Israel by Noah and migrated from their place of origin southwards into Africa. They spread from the north of Africa and southwards, conquering the indigenous peoples because of their superior intelligence and technology. As

⁸ The third group is the Batwa, traditionally thought of as hunters, gatherers and potters, who constituted about 1% of the population in Rwanda.

time went by and a mixing of the races took place, the Hamites' skin color gradually became darker – in medieval times this was interpreted as “the black curse” that Ham's ancestors had been burdened with. Nevertheless, they were clearly distinguishable from the indigenous Africans (the “true Negro”) due to their physiognomy and mental, as well as moral, capabilities (Taylor 1999:39). In this hypothesis theological, biological and racial aspects were combined, and contributed as a whole to legitimize the colonial agenda; not only were Europeans merely repeating actions that were already a part of African history, their actions were necessary in order to bring civilization to these peoples (Trigger 1996:101).

Throughout the early 1900s the biblical aspect of the Hamitic hypothesis was not as prominent as it had once been, and the scientific aspect of it was more highlighted. However, this did not change the moral and mental connotations of each race: people affiliated with the Hamitic race were clearly of “better stock” than Negroes, including Bantus (Prunier 1995:6). Methods from physiognomy such as measurements of the body and placing the person's skin tone in a hierarchy from black to white, and eye color from dark brown to blue, were used to determine which race a person belonged to. Even the “frizzyness” and texture of the hair was an indication of whether you were “just a Negro” or of a race that deserved some privileges (MacGaffey 1966:105-111). This fascination with races was followed by an interest in origin – where did all the different races come from? Anthropological and linguistic evidence was said to point to Northern Africa in the case of the Hamites, perhaps Ethiopia. This had to be the people who several centuries ago brought pastoralism and the institution of centralized kingship to the then “uncivilized” people of Rwanda (Prunier 1995:7). The manner in which these people settled in Rwanda was for a long time interpreted as one marked by violence to a greater or lesser extent. As late as the 1960s it was stated by Maquet (1961:170) that; “Tutsi came into Ruanda as conquerors. Even if their arrival in the country inhabited by Hutu looked rather like a peaceful infiltration, it was nevertheless a conquest”. Thus, the notion of pastoral, foreign Batutsi conquering and subjugating agricultural, indigenous Bahutu was scientifically legitimate throughout and after the colonial years (Prunier 1995:9).

The theories mentioned above created the colonial foundation for Batutsi-privileges, but the tendencies towards “favoritism” of Batutsi might be traced back to the rule of king Rwabugiri in the late 1800s. From about the first quarter of the 19th century the king gave land, and sometimes control over the people who lived on this land, to prominent army chiefs and favored clients – almost always Batutsi. The people who inhabited this land became tenants

(Newbury 1978:19-21). However, they did not have to provide a lot of food or services to the Batutsi, because the Batutsi needed the local peoples' political support. In the late 19th century king Rwabugiri wanted the chiefs to collect tribute in their areas of control. Tenants on the land mentioned above had to pay through a (often) Mututsi owner, and the chief of the geographical area could demand extra payment. Batutsi were also affected, but were exempt from the much resented institution of *ubureetwa*, i.e. the forced labor on a superior's land. Bahutu who were part of an *ubuhake* relationship, characterized by the transfer of cattle, were also exempt from *ubureetwa* (Newbury 1978).

There is no doubt that especially *ubuhake* was an important element in the structuring of power relations in Rwanda, but the exact date of origin and nature of the relationship between patron and client has been debated – much due to the more recent political situation that made this relationship a symbol of everything that was wrong and unjust in the Batutsi's treatment of Bahutu. If we rely on oral traditions and written accounts from colonial times, it seems reasonable to assume that this form of social organization was mutually beneficial and that the positions of both client and patron was open to everyone. A patron gained political power and status by having a number of clients, as well as a standing work-force he could call upon in times of need. However, the times of need could not exceed what the clients found reasonable – in that case they would offer their services to a new patron. In return, the clients could rely upon their patron for assistance and protection (Steinhart 1967:618).

Ubughake clientage entailed that the patron gave his client usufruct rights over one or more heads of cattle. He also assisted and protected his client as long as the contract was valid – a decision made by the patron and unless he terminated the relationship it was hereditary (Maquet 1961:129-130). According to Vansina (2004:46-48), ubuhake benefitted the patron because he could call upon his client's military support in times of unrest or if he wanted to expand his territory of control. It was hence a form of clientage predating the central control of the Nyiginya dynasty, but it was also part of its creation, as it is said to have been introduced by the first Nyiginya king, Ruganzu Ndori, in the 17th century. From this original role, the ubuhake clientage spread to other strata of society creating a division between those with cattle to give away and those who were willing to offer services and agricultural produce in return for usufruct rights over cattle. In this way, cattle and agricultural produce circulated in the society by means of contractual ties between patron and client (Lemarchand 1966:599). However, Newbury (2001:304) has challenged this assumption and emphasizes that the

relationship was not established *because* of the cow – the cow was merely a manifestation of an established relationship. Based on empirical data from south central Rwanda, Newbury claims that it is highly unlikely that ubuhake dates back to the origin of the Nyiginya kingdom – it was rather a form of clientage that flourished in colonial times. In addition, the connection between ubuhake and Bahutu-Batutsi relations is debatable because of data suggesting that this was a preferred form of alliance between members of the Batutsi-elite (Newbury 2001:305). Taking into consideration more recent research there are several indications that the clientage institution in its politically important form dates back to the mid-1800s, a time when the areas in the kingdom's periphery increasingly were subjected to centralized control, contributing to a transformation of the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi. In addition, an epizootic killed large numbers of cattle and made them an even more restricted and desired resource (Newbury 2001:308-309,311-312), which in turn may have led to a hardening of the patron-client relationship at that time.

Several scholars have emphasized the before-mentioned reciprocal aspect of Bahutu-Batutsi relations, claiming that while Batutsi had a grip on power the Bahutu benefitted from being their subjects because of the security and protection they were offered in return. Conducting her fieldwork in Rwanda in 1959-60, Helen Codere proposed a different view on power relations: “(...) the more powerful oppressed the less powerful or the powerless, power was used to the hilt by those who possessed it, and fear and insecurity perpetuated the system” (Codere 1962:82). In questionnaires given by Codere, the majority of Bahutu denied that Banyarwanda treated each other better 100 years ago, while the majority of Batutsi stated the opposite. This pattern was repeated in Codere's question about whether life was better before the arrival of the Europeans. It is clearly a possibility that the answers given were affected by the tense political situation at the time, but it must be noted that several of the Batutsi asked (regardless of their level of education or occupation) stated that Bahutu were mistreated before the arrival of Europeans. Some also complained about the past situation when Batutsi had positions of power; fierce power struggle amongst Batutsi existed and they were faced with the threat of being deposed, lose everything they had, or even being tortured or murdered at any time if that was what the king commanded. The pressure amongst Batutsi led those with power to treat the less powerful in an exploitative manner, and the protection they received in return is according to Codere (1962:83) comparable with the one offered by American gangsters in the 1920s.

Hence, it is apparent that the exploitative tendency that came to characterize the colonial relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi was introduced before the colonial presence, but it was through the power given to the Batutsi-elite by the colonialists that this was given the opportunity to develop into a more clear-cut distinction between Batutsi-privileges and Bahutu-dependency. The possibility of “becoming” a Batutsi by climbing the social ladder was eradicated as a consequence of the racialization and politicization of the identities during the colonial years; you were born, and died, as either a Muhutu or a Mututsi (Mafeje 1998:118). This was reinforced by the introduction of identity cards where the cardholder’s racial or ethnic identity was printed. Being a Muhutu or a Mututsi strongly affected the opportunities a person had in life, especially with regards to education and, as a consequence of this, possibilities of politically influential positions. The Belgian administrators tried to introduce some measures to change aspects of the social and political organization in Rwanda: “(...) a 1917 ordinance required a Tutsi who deprived a Hutu of his property to make double restitution; in 1923 domestic slavery was abolished and traditional dues in labour and service to an overlord was lessened; in 1954 ubuhake was to be abolished in a series of progressive stages” (Codere 1962:63). However, the enforcement of the rules was not straight forward, and on a rural basis the chiefs and peasants who could have been protected by them had either no knowledge of them or very meager chances of getting support in a court of law still dominated by Batutsi. Hence, people further down the hierarchy were more prone to exploitation by both the colonial administration and people higher up in the hierarchy than earlier. Whatever reciprocal aspect that may have been part of the earlier clientage system was blurred throughout the colonial years.

The mainly colonial⁹ distinction between two races – one superior, the other inferior – was also favored within the First Republic, of which Grégoire Kayibanda was the president. Taylor (1999:56) explains this by referring to what I understand as a lack of innovation among members of the new regime: “(...) when an unprepared and egotistical bourgeoisie takes power in the wake of departing Europeans, this elite only reproduces the social relations that characterized colonialism in the first place”. Though I believe this to be correct, I think we should focus on the “egotistical” aspect of the elite: to me it is not a question of whether or not Kayibanda’s regime had the means to create a new way of understanding the Bahutu-Batutsi relationship, it is what they had to gain politically on maintaining the premises of a

⁹ This perception was also dominant among Rwandans who supported a privileged position for Batutsi.

colonial division of races. Some changes were made though: Batutsi were no longer seen as a superior race, rather they were claimed to be an *alien* race that did not belong in Rwanda. Also, the clientage system was perceived as purely exploitative and as a manifestation of the Batutsi repression of Bahutu. The moral qualities associated with each of the races were turned upside down from the colonial years to the years of the First Republic, giving the new Bahutu-elite political legitimacy as indigenous rulers (Taylor 1999:82). Meanwhile, Batutsi who previously supported the notion of separate origin would in the face of revolution advocate a common origin (Taylor 1999:76-77), so as to open up for a political inclusion of Batutsi in the Bahutu-dominated republic.

A racial interpretation of Bahutu and Batutsi, and the theory of separate origin, continued to dominate the official discourse until Habyarimana became president in 1973. During his Second Republic Bahutu and Batutsi were no longer to be thought of as races, but as two ethnic groups who both had their origin in Rwanda.¹⁰ The relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi equaled one between an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority, which in turn legitimized Bahutu's grip on political power. According to Uvin (1999:253):

(...) the affirmation of Hutu (non-Tutsi) ethnicity and its institutionalization in public policy were key components of the ruling elite's strategy of legitimization and control over the state. Whenever this elite was threatened, it exacerbated ethnic divisions to thwart democratization and power sharing.

The majority/minority distinction served the purpose of restricting Batutsi's access to politically important positions, but I would argue that as the tensions rose during the late 1980s and early 1990s the pre-Habyarimana interpretation of Bahutu and Batutsi became dominant in extremist-propaganda. Seeing the Batutsi as racially different or as non-indigenous made it easier to legitimize the fight against RPF and the "elimination" of the Batutsi – after all they had never *belonged* in Rwanda. I would propose a shift from ethnic to racial differentiation in this period as part of the pre-genocide process of alienating Batutsi.

The dominating version of Rwanda's prehistory up until after the genocide, and with the abovementioned exception of Habyarimana's official discourse,¹¹ maintained that Batwa were

¹⁰ They were not interpreted as races in the official discourse, but according to Taylor (1999:84) racial interpretations have probably existed in peoples' minds as they were readily expressed in the years leading up to the genocide.

¹¹ Even though this view existed alongside that of the Second Republic, it was as far as I know not an official alternative to the latter one inside Rwanda.

the first inhabitants of Rwanda, followed by the Bantu who migrated into the area and started practicing sedentary farming – these Bantu were later termed Bahutu. In the 1400s a pastoral people migrated into Rwanda – these were the Batutsi, who were affiliated with the pastoral Bahima of Uganda. Because of the relationship between pastoralism and social structures it has been argued that upon the pastoral Batutsi's arrival in Rwanda, a new form of social organization was introduced – one which created the division between Batutsi who controlled cattle as a resource and Bahutu who wanted to gain access to this resource. The distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi is then seen as that of two different peoples, with different economic specializations and – as a result of this – different social positions within a society where they are culturally and linguistically the same.

Maquet (1961) interpreted this economic difference as so important that it took the form of a caste structure. He based this on information from interviewed Rwandans (exclusively Batutsi), who claimed that there were strict rules of endogamy in pre-colonial times and that Bahutu and Batutsi did not eat their meals in each other's company. This avoidance when it comes to food and sex is typical components of a caste structure as it is founded on beliefs of what is regarded clean and unclean, and it is hence understandable that Maquet would use the term caste to describe the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi. However, I would like to emphasize the probability of some form of social mobility existing in Rwandan society – a Bahutu could become a Batutsi and the other way around: “Although the Interlacustrine social formations like all status-categories were ideologically derived, unlike tribal categories, they were not prescriptive. They allowed political as well as economic mobility” (Mafeje 1998:118). This sort of flexibility is quite untypical of caste structures and I would therefore refrain from seeing this as a term applicable to the Rwandan context.

From a somewhat different perspective it may be argued that different ethnic groups inhabited Rwanda from the 1400s onwards, but that as a result of the interaction and assimilation in this particular form of social organization the ethnic differences faded and were transformed into more of a social distinction (www.sn1.no/Rwanda/historie). In other words, the categories of Bahutu and Batutsi could have started out as ethnic labels and developed into social terms or status categories as the centralized kingdom got a foothold. The ethnic meaning of the terms was then made relevant again by the colonial administration and this created the dangerous situation of fixed privileges. The colonial influence on the ethnic divisions is the current government's main explanation of previous social relations; the official discourse is based on

the idea of common origin for both Bahutu and Batutsi – all Rwandans are Bantu, all of them settled at the same time and all of them contributed to innovations and developments. Hence, the idea of Iron Age migrations of a pastoral people called Batutsi is no longer seen as scientifically plausible.¹² Pastoral and agricultural specialization and the formation of the kingdom are interpreted as internal developments that created a socio-economic distinction between what would be termed Bahutu and Batutsi. This would imply that the construction of the categories Bahutu and Batutsi was a consequence of an internal reorganization of the society, rather than the other way around. The current government claims that Bahutu and Batutsi as ethnic groups therefore is wholly a colonial construction and should be discredited. The only separation in pre-colonial Rwanda was that between rich and poor, which was marked by ownership of and control over large numbers of cattle. The previous assumption that Bahutu had restricted access to cattle and hence made up the poorer strata of society has been denied; all Rwandans had the same possibility of accumulating wealth in the form of cattle and becoming part of the wealthier strata (i.e. becoming Batutsi). Physical characteristics associated with Bahutu and Batutsi have been explained as a result of agricultural versus pastoral diets and are not attributed to race or ethnicity.¹³

All of the abovementioned theories have to a differing extent some interesting elements in them; the emphasis on migrations in the years of colonialism and the First Republic, the interaction between ethnicity and economic specialization, and the alleged social mobility of Bahutu and Batutsi in the pre-colonial era. It all comes down to whether or not we accept that migrations took place in Iron Age Rwanda. If we accept this, I find it plausible that ethnic identities were constructed in this meeting, which could have established the foundation for a division between Bahutu and Batutsi based on ethnic identity and economic specializations. If we do not take possible migrations into consideration and assume that all developments in Rwanda were internal, the government's theory appears more valid and Bahutu and Batutsi become almost synonyms for "rich" and "poor". However, INMR's museum catalogue mentions the possibility of Iron Age migrations based on changes occurring in types of ceramic in the late 5th century AD: "The appearance of this ceramic could be related to the introduction of new groups of people into the existing population" (Misago & Van Pee 2008:40). The archaeological indications for Iron Age migrations in Rwanda are limited,

¹² Interview with Professor Kanimba Misago, October 29 2009. Place: INMR.

¹³ Conversation with a representative from Mainz museum in Germany, which cooperates with INMR, 5 October 2009. Place: INMR.

whether it be in the 5th or in the 15th century, but considering the movement of people and ideas that took place in Rwanda's vicinity I find it likely that this directly affected Rwanda as well. This is not to say that the categories Bahutu and Batutsi existed at that time, or that the people who migrated into Rwanda entered with all the necessary preconditions to found a prosperous kingdom. I would like to propose a course of action where mainly pastoral peoples entered Rwanda, the meeting-point between the newcomers and the people who already lived in the area created an awareness of the differences between them, which became the basis of new identities and interaction. If I understand Barth correctly this would be a situation where in ethnic identities can be constructed. As Hodder (1982) has argued in the case of Baringo tribes, ethnic differences have a tendency to be more strongly expressed in (parts of) material culture in times of resource competition. At the same time, internal homogeneity is emphasized. The communication of differences and homogeneity in material culture is a result of the increased importance in difficult times to distinguish between those who are entitled to resources and services as members of a group, and those who are not. If pastoralists and agriculturalists in Rwanda competed to get access to sufficient land for their respective purposes, could their economic specialization have become the material culture that was overtly communicated? The ethnic markers in this case could have been a pastoral orientation versus an agricultural orientation. This entails that the ethnic identities were very much economic identities. The social mobility of the categories Bahutu and Batutsi could then be explained as a result of the economic aspect being emphasized more than other (and perhaps more prescribed) aspects of the ethnic identity.

The scenario above is one possible way of understanding the Rwandan Iron Age and the construction of identities. However, as Mamdani has emphasized in his analysis of political violence in Rwanda, it is essential to understand Bahutu and Batutsi as political identities first and cultural or economic identities second. Therefore, he claims that understanding Bahutu and Batutsi is inevitably connected to understanding the political processes in Rwandan history, especially that of centralization and conquest in the 19th century. If I read Mamdani correctly, this entails a perspective that focuses more on the political motivations behind the interpretations of Bahutu and Batutsi than what archaeology may or may not propose as likely explanations. Jones (1997:143) claims that: "(...) particular ethnic identities, and the representations of the past associated with them, are produced in specific socio-historical contexts characterized by relations of power". It is these "relations of power" that are important, and we have to ask ourselves: what was to be gained by proclaiming Batutsi as a

superior race or by proclaiming Bahutu as the indigenous population? In which political contexts are the interpretations made relevant and efficient tools in a certain kind of social organization? These are important questions because they make us aware of the mechanisms that shape archaeological “truths”.

4.2 Iron Age Rwanda and the formation of the kingdom.

Rwanda in the late 1800s was a highly centralized state controlled by the *Mwami* (the king), the queen mother, chiefs and their sub-chiefs. They received tribute and taxes from the inhabitants who were granted access to land for cultivation and/or pasture, cattle and other goods in return. Rwanda was at that time ruled by the Nyiginya dynasty and had through extensive expansion gained almost the territory it has today. According to archaeological and historical sources the Nyiginya-ruled kingdom probably dates back to the 17th century. The kingship institution may be of an earlier date – some have proposed the 15th century as a likely date for the formation of the kingdom (Misago 2008:24). This was the result of a longer process of consolidation and centralization which may have started around 1000 AD, and continued up until the arrival of the Europeans, when Rwanda obtained its current boundaries. There are uncertainties about exactly what happened in the years between 1000 and 1400 AD due to a lack of sufficient archaeological research, but one important development in this period seems to be the increasing importance of pastoralism and the introduction of cattle-as-wealth, i.e. the perception of cattle as more than just meat and milk (Schoenbrun 1998:74-79).

The earliest traces of cattle in Rwanda date back to the 3rd century AD (Misago 1997:67). As I have already mentioned in this thesis, archaeological material from Rwanda is limited and it might therefore be fruitful to look at developments in Rwanda’s proximity. Andrew Reid’s interpretation of the material at the important Iron Age site Ntuusi in western Uganda suggests that a specialization in cultivation and cattle herding had begun to develop in the early second millennia AD, at least in this area. The interpretation is based on cattle remains (whether they were mature or immature when slaughtered, as this is used as indications of distinct cattle practices), roulette-decorated pottery, and size and distribution of settlements. An economic specialization would have given some people greater control over an economic sphere and a sought-after resource, which might have been an important precondition for the social and economic distinctions seen in the Great Lakes’ kingdoms to come (Reid 1996a; Reid 1996b).

In Rwanda, finds of charred seeds indicate that the users of early Iron Age Urewe ceramics cultivated cereals, more specifically sorghum and pearl millet, in addition to keeping livestock (Giblin 2008:50-51). According to Schoenbrun (1993:51-52), bananas were also an important part of the Iron Age diet. Recent research in the west of Uganda have raised the question as to whether bananas could have been introduced at a much earlier date than previously thought, perhaps as early as the 4th millennium BC (Lejju et al. 2006). The earlier proposed dates have focused on the period between 500 and 900 AD as the time of introduction, but with a more advanced cultivation taking place after 900 AD as a result of contact with Forest peoples and Rutarans, i.e. people living in the area of what is now the DRC's side of Lake Kivu and on the western shore of Lake Victoria.¹⁴ Archaeological research conducted by Giblin shows some changes in the location of sites in Late Iron Age (1000-1900 AD), when an earlier preference for settlement on hilltops was combined with an increasing use of lower altitude sites (Giblin 2008:48-49). The situation in the north was somewhat different from this southern and central area development; the people who lived in the dramatic landscape of the north settled close to lakes and in caves in the early Iron Age, and also at higher altitude sites later in the Iron Age. These changes may reflect a population increase in this period, which called for exploitation of a wider range of resources (Giblin 2008).

Another change visible in the archaeological material is the introduction of the roulette-decorated pottery, which was used alongside the established Urewe-type pottery. While the latter type dominated in early Iron Age, the roulette-decorated pottery was increasingly used in the late Iron Age. Among the sites containing Urewe pottery most also show traces of metal production. This strongly suggests an early date for the production of iron in Rwanda and I would therefore refrain from including iron working as one of the abovementioned changes that occurred in Rwanda in the transition from early to late Iron Age. The production of iron has a long history in the Great Lakes area as a whole, and in Rwanda traces of such activity have been dated to 500 BC by Schoenbrun (1998:71). However, there are some regional differences between the north and the southern and central parts of the country with only a few of the surveyed sites in the north showing signs of iron production (Giblin 2008). Considering the archaeological material from Rwanda and Uganda it seems as though a more specialized economy, roulette-decorated pottery and a possible population increase are temporally connected events that appear in the archaeological material from around 1000 AD.

¹⁴ According to Schoenbrun (1993), a specialization in banana cultivation existed alongside that of pastoral specialization, and a similar basis for control and social hierarchies developed as a consequence.

Whether or not these changes may be attributed to migrating peoples or internal developments is still debated, the latter theory being the one accepted by Rwandan authorities. However, as I have already mentioned, roulette-decorated pottery and changes in settlement patterns are among the factors that according to Reid (1996) indicate the development of specialized economies, and the subsequent construction of an elite-strata, in parts of Uganda. Perhaps the changes seen in the Rwandan material may be indications of similar developments.

What would be the consequences of the proposed economic specialization? It has been argued by several scholars that the pastoral lifestyle commonly associated with the Batutsi has to be understood as a key-factor in their following dominance (Mafeje 1998; Maquet 1961; Lemarchand 1966). Cattle as a resource is self-reproductive in a way that land is not; it is able to reproduce without the owner's intervention and is hence less work-demanding than the cultivation of land. It is also easier for the cattle-owner to accumulate a surplus than for the farmer. In his research on the economic life of Fur in Sudan, Haaland (1969:63) stressed that: "Cattle constitute the only way of accumulating capital and are an investment that gives profit in the form of calves". If this was the case in Iron Age Rwanda it could help shed some light on the preference given to pastoral values and the development of institutions which restricted access to ownership of cattle. Another important factor of pastoralism is that cattle as a mobile resource demands an elaborate system of defense (Mafeje 1998:48-49), because of the quite widespread raiding of cattle that occurred in the Great Lakes area. Therefore, the development of complex social structures built on the need for protection and distribution of cattle is likely to follow from a pastoral economy (Schoenbrun 1998:220-223). These social structures often create wealthy and powerful elites, who control ownership of cattle. It is very often seemingly small differences that creates an advantage for some people, and make them more powerful than others. In Rwanda, this advantage could have been the previously discussed patron-client relationship. Assuming that the institution dates back to the 17th century as argued by Vansina (2004), clientage could have enabled some pastoralists to attract followers who were willing to protect their resources and participate in activities leading to further accumulation of capital, e.g. cattle-raiding. The ability to control and accumulate cattle and people is likely to have been a precondition of becoming a powerful person in pre-colonial Rwanda – an ability that may have been facilitated by the clientage institution.

The question of who inhabited Rwanda in the Iron Age is a complex one, and to explore this it is necessary to draw parallels to Rwanda's neighboring countries and more specifically to

Uganda. According to Mafeje, Bairu, Bahima and Batutsi were essentially status categories in Uganda and Rwanda, while Bahutu was “a specific term which referred to the indigenous inhabitants of what is now known as Rwanda and Burundi” (Mafeje 1998:45). Bahima pastoralists entered Rwanda in the 16th and 17th centuries, but were not given the prominent position they enjoyed in parts of Uganda – these positions were occupied by Batutsi (Mafeje 1998:48). If I understand Mafeje correctly, the Bahima of Uganda (and not those of Rwanda) are comparable to the Batutsi in Rwanda, because of the superior social and political status they each had in their areas of control. This view is still supported in Uganda, where it is said that Bahima’s ancestors, the Bachwezi, founded an early kingdom in western Uganda. Bahima have been “given” a glorious past as the founders of the great Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom – a position they still enjoy today. I was also told that it is commonly acknowledged that Bahima, just like Batutsi, have been given all the important positions in society and that they *even today* dominate the political arena.¹⁵ Some have argued that Bahima and Batutsi are the same (see for example Reid 2002:41),¹⁶ but it is difficult, if not impossible, to argue for either a common or a separate origin of Bahima and Batutsi based on the archaeological material. We should therefore be careful when comparing the two. It is sufficient to note that both Bahima and Batutsi have been categorized as pastoralists, and that this common economic specialization may have led to their association with the foundation of kingdoms.

Even though the formation of the Rwandan kingdom to a large degree has been attributed to pastoralists, because of the importance of ownership and distributive control over cattle resources in relations of power, it must be kept in mind that even though members of the elite were most often Batutsi, not all Batutsi were members of the elite (Mafeje 1998). According to Mafeje, pastoralists, whom he equates with Batutsi, migrated into Rwanda from the Interlacustrine kingdoms of the north in the 16th century. At that time, the area was inhabited by the mainly agricultural Bahutu – *indigenous* to Rwanda. Because Mafeje is not clear on this point, I assume that “indigenous Bahutu” entails “non-indigenous Batutsi”. Mafeje does not state that migrating Batutsi brought with them a centralized organization and imposed this on the indigenous Bahutu, but as a consequence of their control over and accumulation of cattle the politically powerful stratum that developed into royal clans were drawn from this

¹⁵ Interview with Jackline Nyiracyiza, September 29 and October 1 2009. Place: Uganda National Museum.

¹⁶ Informants at Uganda National museum claimed without a doubt that the Batutsi were “Bahima of Rwanda”, while this link has not been acknowledged in Rwandan official discourse; “The majority of Hima live in Ankole (Uganda). Only a few live in Rwanda” (Misago & Van Pee 2008:144). Hence, Bahima and Batutsi are not seen as the same in Rwanda.

group of pastoralists. However, at the end of his analysis Mafeje (1998:129) concludes: “(...) contrary to the stereotype that pastoralists were the founders of the kingdoms in the Great Lakes region, neither the pastoralists nor the agriculturalists can take credit for this”. Who or what, then, can take credit for the kingdoms? Are they a result of ecological factors, as emphasized by Newbury (2001), combined with economic adaptations – for example a tributary mode of production, as Mafeje terms the nature of both pastoralism and agriculture in the Great Lakes region? According to Newbury (2001:283), the formation of the kingdoms in the Great Lakes region may be attributed to the population’s response to changes in their environment:

(...) the consolidation of power in the western highlands appears to have occurred here at roughly the same time that similar processes were occurring in Rwanda; such indications over a broad region suggest not a calculated political movement as would underlie assumptions of migration and conquest by corporate groups, but more likely a common response by separate groups to broad ecological influences (...) (Newbury 2001:283).

While Mafeje’s theories are in partly agreement with Newbury’s, he maintains that migrations were an important factor; Mafeje (1998: 22, 41) sees the kingdoms as attributable to the respective indigenous populations who were inspired to establish kingdoms as a result of contact with pastoral migrants. Following the arguments of both Mafeje and Newbury, we may assume that both indigenous agriculturalists and immigrant pastoralists can take credit for the foundation of the Interlacustrine kingdoms, as they are a result of their interaction.

The assumption that Batutsi populated Rwanda at a later date than Bahutu, and that they brought with them a form of social organization that led to the formation of the kingdom, has been criticized by Taylor (1999:65): “(...) non-Bantu speaking agro-pastoralist or pastoralist peoples more than likely preceded rather than followed Bantu speakers into the area (...)”. Taylor further states that there is no evidence of the Batutsi conquering the Bahutu or of their involvement in the creation of centralized political institutions. If Batutsi populated Rwanda at an earlier date than previously thought would not the kingship institution be traceable further back in time as well? Unless this was something introduced by migrating Bahutu, which Taylor (1999:65) proposes, it could be seen as a consequence of internal developments; an adaptation to ecological, demographical and economical factors that occurred in the late Iron Age. This is to a large degree in compliance with the present official discourse. However, it is important to further investigate the interaction between peoples inhabiting the Great Lakes area as this could provide us with a more complete picture of cultural assimilation or

integration. When proposing that the formation of the kingdom could be a result of internal developments I do not mean that we should completely disregard the importance of Iron Age migrations, rather, I propose a situation where the internal developments are seen in relation and interaction with earlier or contemporary migrations.

What I find problematic in several of the abovementioned theories is the seemingly uncritical use of the terms Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa when discussing the Iron Age population of Rwanda and the introduction of the kingship institution. Is it even possible to use these quite modern terms in the context of Rwandan Iron Age? If so, how are these groups distinguishable from each other in the archaeological record? According to staff at the INMR the difference between Bahutu and Batutsi is not distinguishable in material culture or in physiognomy, i.e. skeletal remains.¹⁷ It does not seem to be enough material to state that Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi entered Rwanda in either order I have referred to earlier, or even to assume that these modern groups can be traced back thousands, or even several hundreds of years – to do this we have to assume that the categories are static and unchangeable which a quick look into Rwandan political history discredits. By using the terms Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi about the people who inhabited Iron Age Rwanda these categories are given a sort of continuity that there for the time being is no actual foundation for. Therefore, I would argue that it could be fruitful to discuss the Iron Age developments mentioned above without reference to Bahutu and Batutsi, because these categories have a tendency to influence the interpretations as a result of their unavoidable political connotations.

Chapter 5: Propaganda and the past.

“In the last resort, we can say that Tutsi and Hutu have killed each other more to upbraid a certain vision they have of themselves, of the others and of their place in the world than because of material interests” (Prunier 1995:40).

In this chapter I will discuss how the “visions” that Prunier is referring to in the citation above are related to propaganda encouraged by Rwandan governments, and how the propaganda in different ways are connected to interpretations of past events. According to Philip M. Taylor, propaganda is concerned with “(...) persuading people to do things which benefit those doing the persuading, either directly or indirectly” (Taylor 1995:6). This is not done by telling

¹⁷ Interview with Professor Kanimba Misago, October 29 2009. Place: INMR. Personal comment by researcher Jerome Karangwa, November 2 2009. Place: INMR.

people lies, as we may assume when dealing with propaganda – it has to be rooted in some sort of truth or reality to make people accept it. Propaganda is powerful in the way that it encourages certain perspectives, thoughts and behaviours while at the same time discourages individual reflections on the matter (Taylor 1995: 4-6). In the following, I will discuss how the events of 1959 influenced the interpretations of events both preceding and following the revolution, and how these interpretations incited action amongst Rwandans. Taylor (1995:4-5) argues that propaganda is an unavoidable part of politics, and I will therefore include the current government's use of propaganda in this discussion.

5.1 The Social Revolution and the creation of a Rwandan republic.

During the 1950s it became increasingly clear to the colonial power that Rwanda was moving towards independence, both by looking at the internal developments in Rwanda and the tendencies in colonial Africa at large. The Belgian response to this situation was to establish a foundation for a future, positive relationship with Rwanda's new rulers. In order to do this they needed to turn their backs on the Batutsi-elite and focus on supporting the emerging group of Bahutu intellectuals and their followers. Educated, intellectual Bahutu was a relatively new phenomenon in Rwanda as education above a certain level had been restricted to Batutsi. The education previously made accessible to the Bahutu differed also in some of its form and contents from the Batutsi's: Bahutu learned Kiswahili while Batutsi learned French (the language of the powerful), the education of Batutsi was more directed towards the students' future role as "leaders" while Bahutu were not expected or desired to fill important posts (Mamdani 2002:111-112). The fact that some Bahutu acquired a higher education in the 1950s was due to the Catholic Church and its newfound empathy for the oppressed and downtrodden Bahutu majority. The latter's salvation would be education, and the Catholic Church would provide this in return of the Bahutu's support. The church depended on this alliance to ensure their continued presence and power in Rwandan society. This was something they feared they could no longer expect from the existing Batutsi elite, who proclaimed a Rwandan independence largely without future Belgian influence or ties (Prunier 1999:42-44). In other words, the changing position of the Belgian colonial administration was a result of a souring relationship with the Batutsi-elite in the face of independence and a "moral awakening" towards the Bahutu.

Some of the Bahutu who received education from the Catholic Church later became the leaders of the Social Revolution. They had experienced that their education proved almost

worthless in a society where professional jobs to a large extent were restricted to people categorized as Batutsi. The frustration of not being acknowledged by the society as educated and competent people, combined with the support and influence of the Catholic Church, created a suitable environment for a social revolution; the discrimination of Bahutu had to be put to an end, and in order to do that Bahutu had to unite, overthrow the old Batutsi hegemony and create a new society.

Grégoire Kayibanda, who was a Muhutu from southern Rwanda, was in the frontlines of the Rwandan Social Revolution. He was well educated and politically active from the beginning of the 1950s. In 1957 he wrote *The Bahutu Manifesto* together with nine other Bahutu intellectuals, in which Bahutu solidarity was called for in order to free the majority from the oppressive power of Batutsi. The manifest drew upon a version of the Rwandan past where the two *races* Bahutu and Batutsi had always been tied together in a struggle for power, where they were seen as opposites in an unchangeable way, and where the Batutsi unrightfully had taken power and created the current unjust situation for all Bahutu. The word “race” was used in the manifest to denote Bahutu and Batutsi, which was a legacy from the colonial construct of Bahutu as Bantu and Batutsi as a Hamitic, superior and alien, race (Prunier 1999:46): “The word ‘race’ used in this social context was an alarm-bell. It was of course the product of years of European harping on the ‘superior race’ of ‘aristocratic invaders’ who had come from anywhere between Tibet and ancient Egypt.” Based on colonial constructs and “Hutu power”¹⁸ ideology, Kayibanda founded the political movement PARMEHUTU in 1959 and shortly after UNAR, a political movement directed towards Batutsi and the continuation of the monarchy, was established. These two parties soon evolved into militant groups and the relationship between the Bahutu and the Batutsi population became increasingly tense.

1959 marks the beginning of the Social Revolution: PARMEHUTU mobilized parts of the Bahutu population in their fight for power and thousands of Batutsi were forced to flee their homes as they had been made into “just” targets of violent Bahutu rage. PARMEHUTU declared Rwanda a republic in 1961, they seized power and Kayibanda was made the first prime minister of the new republic. However, it was not until one year later that Rwanda officially gained independence. PARMEHUTU won the election and Kayibanda was made President of the Rwandan republic. The end of the Social Revolution did by no means

¹⁸ Hutu power in this context is not synonymous with the organized Hutu Power group of the early 1990s. Rather, it refers to a conviction of Bahutu empowerment in all spheres of society – liberation of the oppressed.

indicate a cessation of the violent relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi: the Batutsi who survived and who did not flee during the revolution now lived in fear as second-class citizens (Prunier 1999:80). Some of the ones who did flee to neighboring countries launched several attacks on the Rwandan border in the early 1960s. The Bahutu government called the rebels the *inyenzi*, meaning cockroach in Kinyarwanda. The "*inyenzi*-rebels" probably did more harm than good for the remaining Batutsi in Rwanda: their attacks were not well organized, they raided and sometimes killed innocent peasants, Batutsi in Rwanda were killed in revenge attacks by their Bahutu neighbors, and – most importantly – they provided the Bahutu government with real "proof" that all Batutsi were potential enemies of Rwanda. Kayibanda went as far as proclaiming that Bahutu and Batutsi were two different entities without any mutual understanding or compassion (Genocide: Kigali Memorial Centre 2004). This, combined with the impunity that dominated the handling of cases where Bahutu had killed Batutsi, created an environment of fear, distrust and violence.

This continued to a lesser extent after 1973 when Juvenal Habyarimana seized power in a bloodless coup and his party, Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND), became the new leaders of Rwanda. He proposed a different view on Bahutu and Batutsi, in which they were not seen as racially different. Rather, they were two ethnic groups who belonged equally to the country, but – and this is an important but – it had to be recognized that Bahutu were the majority and the Batutsi the minority. Hence, the society should be organized according to a quota system, which entailed that Batutsi in theory were given the same opportunities as Bahutu to make a successful living. However, it was difficult for Batutsi to gain access to the few official posts open to them, but quite a few proved successful in the private sector which was unaffected by the federal quota system. During Habyarimana's rule the Batutsi, as a minority, had close to no political power and continued to be the scapegoats in times of trouble. This was true especially towards the end of the 1980s when Rwanda had increasing financial problems, people suffered, Habyarimana's popularity decreased, and the problem of repatriation of Batutsi refugees, stemming from several earlier episodes of violence, resurfaced.

Some of the Rwandan refugees in Uganda had fought alongside Yoweri Museveni in 1986, hoping to gain Ugandan citizenship after several years in the country. Failing this, they saw as their only opportunity to return to a homeland many of them never had seen with their own eyes. Under the leadership of, amongst others, Paul Kagame, the RPF invaded Rwanda on

October 1 1990. They were soon pushed back by the Rwandan Government Forces, but the fact that an attack like this could actually happen forced the Rwandan government to reconsider what to do with the Batutsi refugee problem. The RPF proclaimed their right to return to their country as Rwandans and were not willing to back down.

Following the 1990 invasion civil war broke out and yet again the opposition between Bahutu and Batutsi (both the Batutsi in Rwanda and those in neighboring countries) became intensified. Up until 1991, Habyarimana's MRNDD¹⁹ had been the single party in Rwanda, but external pressure opened up for the formation of new parties. As the violence and civil war escalated in the early 1990s extremist branches of several political parties were established, with CDR's²⁰ *Interahamwe* and MRNDD's *Impuzamugambi*²¹ as the most feared and violent ones. These groups were composed mainly of young, male Bahutu, most of them poor and without very promising futures. They were quite easy targets for the government-controlled propaganda against Batutsi; it was argued that the elimination of Batutsi would be materially beneficial for the Bahutu. There were other aspects of the propaganda as well, many of which referred to historical events, and these were significant in facilitating the general population's anger towards Batutsi.

5.2 Archaeological and historical aspects of extremist propaganda.

To maintain the feelings of unchangeable and inevitable difference between Bahutu and Batutsi, the government was dependent on keeping the history as they saw it alive in the minds of the population. This is true for both Kayibanda and Habyarimana's governments.

The dominant view of the past during the 1950s and Kayibanda's rule was that the oppression experienced by Bahutu could be traced back to the alleged conquering of Rwanda by Batutsi in the 15th century. The argument following from this was that it was about time for the indigenous Bahutu to regain what was rightfully theirs. This argument gave the Social Revolution a sense of historical backing; the revolutionists were correcting centuries of wrongs against the Bahutu. If we were to consider this version of Rwandan history as true

¹⁹ An extra D was added to MRND's name in 1991, making the party's new name Mouvement Républicain National pour Démocratie et le Développement.

²⁰ Coalition pour la Défense de la République.

²¹ Interahamwe means those who work/attack together, while Impuzamugambi means those who have the same goal/a single goal. In pre-colonial warfare it was common that groups of soldiers had nicknames similar to the above-mentioned.

then the Bahutu claim for emancipation through the abolishment of Batutsi-power would seem somewhat legitimate. However, it was not the case that all Batutsi had oppressed and exploited all Bahutu since the 15th century. To make matters even more complicated, Batutsi and Bahutu have not been clear-cut categories; it is highly likely that the meaning they were infused with have changed a great deal from the 15th to the 20th century.²² Therefore, it makes little sense to talk about what Bahutu endured during Batutsi rule several centuries ago. What was achieved by presenting Bahutu and Batutsi as static categories was a sense of “solidarity in suffering” among Bahutu, and an awareness of the time-depth in their suffering. Batutsi were at the same time portrayed as power gripping and merciless by nature.

The historizing of the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi had the all-important function of creating the image of all Bahutu as the always oppressed and all Batutsi as the always oppressor. The Social Revolution had changed Bahutu’s position in the society, but it was always emphasized that the Batutsi nature had not changed. If given the opportunity, Batutsi would seize power, reinstate the monarchy and Bahutu would once again be the oppressed. This was a situation people feared, either because of their own experiences during the colonial years or because of stories passed on to them, and I would argue that to feed this fear was the main aim of the propaganda from the 1950s up until the genocide.

What gave life to these perceptions of the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi, and what was the Batutsi version of the past? As I have mentioned earlier, the colonial construction of Bahutu and Batutsi as racial identities in the early 1900s proved disastrous for the years to come. Rwandans were taught the racial differences in school and internalized the colonial mindset. They were taught that Batutsi belonged to the superior Hamitic race, which made them both more intelligent and more beautiful than Bahutu, who belonged to the Bantu race (Prunier 1999:38-39). Hamites were not “really” Negroes, while Bantu were classified under what Seligman termed “hamiticized Negroes” (Seligman 1959:43). Most European scholars of the early 1900s agreed that Batutsi-Hamites had invaded Rwanda around the 15th century and that they had subjugated the Bahutu-Bantu who already inhabited the area. The Batutsi-Hamites established centralized kingship as form of rule and represented thus a more civilized society than what had existed before their arrival.

²² See discussion in chapter 4.

Internalizing this version of the past had to create conflict; Bahutu were taught to see themselves as an inferior race destined to be peasants and the servants of *abazungu* and Batutsi, while the latter could raise their heads high, certain of their superiority and the legitimacy of their hold on power. Thus, the system of discrimination was created through the colonial laws and regulations, but it was reproduced by Rwandans (Taylor 1999). The reproduction of the colonial constructs did not stop after Rwanda was granted independence. Instead, the colonial version of history was inverted; the Batutsi-Hamites were portrayed as alien because they had invaded Rwanda from abroad and had consequentially no rights to Rwanda – they did not belong there. Bahutu-Bantu on the other hand, was the indigenous population of the country and should therefore be the leaders of it. The alien/indigenous dichotomy, based on assumed past realities, had immense political repercussions and would explicitly be evoked decades later in extremist-propaganda.

The October 1990 invasion by the RPF triggered massive anti-Batutsi propaganda – the Batutsi had now shown their true colors and could not be trusted, whether they were RPF or not. In December 1990 the magazine *Kangura*²³ printed the “Hutu Ten Commandments”, which strongly dissuaded Bahutu from having any relations with the Batutsi: “His only aim is the supremacy of his ethnic group” and “The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi”.²⁴ The CDR and *Kangura* kept close ties, and Rwandans could be sure to know what was going to happen before it happened by reading the magazine. The February 1991 issue incited openly to violence by advising that all who supported RPF should be “exterminated”. This shows that the dehumanizing of Batutsi was well in progress; they were only *inyenzi* (cockroaches) who should be exterminated, a disease the country had to be freed from in order to survive and prosper.²⁵ References to Rwanda’s past were frequent and focused mainly upon how the Bahutu had been treated by Batutsi rulers, and that RPF’s main goal was to invade and reinstate the Batutsi monarchy – as they according to history had done several centuries ago. The unchanging nature of the Batutsi was also used as an argument for fighting against them and once and for all eliminate them; “A cockroach gives birth to a cockroach (...) the history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi always stays exactly the same, that he has never changed”.²⁶ The options presented to the public was either to live in a world where

²³ *Kangura* means “wake others up” in Kinyarwanda.

²⁴ “Hutu Ten Commandments”, no. 4 and 8. Display at the Kigali Memorial Centre.

²⁵ Display at the Kigali Memorial Centre.

²⁶ *Kangura*, March 1993. Display at the Kigali Memorial Centre.

they had to anticipate that their enemies and oppressors sooner or later would attack them and monopolize power, or to eliminate them once and for all in order to create a “clean” society.

The message of extermination to solve the Batutsi problem was repeated in other sources of propaganda, most importantly the radio station RTLM (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines). RTLM broadcasted anti-Batutsi material from 1993, then in relation to resentment towards the peace-talks between Habyarimana and RPF in Arusha, and up until the end of the genocide (Prunier 1999:189,200). Major General Roméo Dallaire advocated the closing of the radio station during the genocide, as it openly incited to the killing of innocent people. Unfortunately, he never won through and RTLM could broadcast throughout the massacres and encourage the population to “work harder”: “The graves are not yet quite full. Who is going to do the good work and help us fill them completely?” (RTLM broadcast cited in Prunier 1999:224). It is noteworthy that the co-founder of RTLM was Ferdinand Nahimana, a historian who published several books on Rwandan history both before and after he got involved in RTLM. The messages transmitted in these broadcasts corresponded with the statements in *Kangura*: every Rwandan was encouraged to look into the country’s history to predict the future; if Bahutu did not stand up for themselves as they did in 1959 they were bound to be subjected to the returning Batutsi. It must not be forgotten that the radio broadcasts were the ones that really reached out to the masses in Rwanda; many rural Rwandans were illiterate and the radio was their main source of information on national matters (Prunier 1999:133).

Leon Mugesera, a representative of the MRNDD, stated in his November 1992 speech: “Understand that he whose throat you’ve not yet cut is he who will cut yours”, implying that the mistake that was made in 1959 by allowing Batutsi either to flee or to continue living in the country had to be corrected. Even though the Hamitic hypothesis had been scientifically discredited several decades ago, it was very much a part of people’s way of thinking, mainly the part which argued that Batutsi belonged to a different race than Bahutu and that they as such did not have their origin in Rwanda (Taylor 1999). Mugesera was no exception, referring in his speech to the “homeland” of the Batutsi: “They belong in Ethiopia, and we are going to find them a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo River...” (Mugesera cited in Prunier 1999:172). During the genocide the bodies of massacred Batutsi were thrown into this river, perhaps a direct consequence of Mugesera’s request and the assumption that Batutsi had their roots in Ethiopia.

This brief look at some of the arguments in anti-Batutsi propaganda,²⁷ spanning from the 1950s up until the genocide in 1994, shows that it revolved a great deal around historical misconceptions. These were to a large degree constructed in colonial times, but were internalized and seen as truths by both Bahutu and Batutsi before independence. After independence, the same history was repeated but with opposite values ascribed to the two categories. The archaeological indications of a Batutsi invasion in the 15th century, the formation of the kingdom by the Batutsi, and the oppression of Bahutu by Batutsi from the 15th to the 19th century are lacking. What are probably factual claims of the propaganda though is the fact that the mwami was always Mututsi, that some Batutsi cooperated with the colonial administration and benefitted from it, and that Bahutu were discriminated against during the colonial years. Needless to say, it is not the complete factuality of the claims that make propaganda effective. Rather, it is taking advantage of people's worst fears and that is exactly what the *Kangura*, RTLM and many others succeeded in doing during the years leading up to the genocide.

The current government is trying to avoid racial and ethnic stereotypes by publicly banning them, and is instead focused on constructing a national identity. In what ways are propaganda used as a means to achieve this political project? As mentioned above, fear is an important component of propaganda. What could be the Rwandan population's greatest fear? A likely answer is a new genocide, as well as being accused of being a *génocidaire*. This is reflected in the official discourse which presents the government as liberators and the bulwark against renewed violence. An example of this may be the Rwandan newspaper *New Times*²⁸ with its front page almost without exception adorned by President Kagame and his latest accomplishment. Post-genocide matters are presented in a very "forward-looking" manner; perpetrators are being brought to trial before the *gacaca*²⁹ judges, houses are being rebuilt, and reconciliation projects have been initiated. All of this is good news and it might give people some hope that it is possible to regain a sense of normalcy again, but where are the

²⁷ RPF had its own radio station called Radio Muhabura and published the magazine *Kanguka* ("wake up" in Kinyarwanda), but I am not discussing these because of their limited audience in Rwanda. One of the reasons for this was that Radio Muhabura broadcasted in English.

²⁸ See www.newtimes.com/rw.

²⁹ *Gacaca* is a kinyarwanda word meaning "justice/judgement on the grass", and is a traditional way of settling local disputes. After the genocide, this system has been used to deal with genocide suspects; the suspects are given a chance to tell their version of what happened, to admit to crimes, and to ask for forgiveness in front of people from their community.

stories about the issues Rwanda still faces? What about the victims who do not feel the capacity to forgive and move on? What about all of those put in the category of perpetrator (in a social, not a judicial manner) because they happen to be a Muhutu? It is something potentially dangerous about presenting an official status-report to the people that does not address some of the important problems they face in everyday life – it devalues their experiences and points of view. The current government has indeed been criticized for the way they portray and commemorate the events of 1994; the version told and officially acknowledged is the “Batutsi version”, i.e. the history is told from the perspective of Batutsi-victims and Batutsi-winners (the RPF). There is very little room in Rwanda for alternative versions of the past, for example the fact that there were many Bahutu who lost their loved ones as well, that most Bahutu were not perpetrators, and that the RPF needs to take responsibility for their human rights violations (Lemarchand 2008a). According to Hintjens (2008:82), the number of genocide suspects has increased radically the last years: “(...) Kagame reportedly claimed that around one million Rwandans were genocide suspects; the Rwandan ambassador to Belgium later cited two million, equivalent to almost the entire adult Hutu male population”. It might be assumed that one reason for this tendency is that the government wants all *génocidaires* to be accounted for and the scale of the genocide to be taken seriously. However, by increasing the number of suspects on almost a yearly basis, combined with the pro-RPF contents of national media, the government may risk to “feed” the revisionists. If revisionists are able to disprove the government’s statements concerning the genocide because they are not based on facts, it could make it easier for them to argue against the genocide as a whole. This is one of the potential dangers of RPF-propaganda. Another problem in the official discourse, which I will discuss in the following case studies, is the construction of a biased official memory that challenges the inclusiveness of a national identity.

Archaeology and distinct versions of history have been the backdrop and inspiration for government-initiated propaganda for several decades, serving the purpose of shaping Rwandans’ minds, behavior and – ultimately – actions. It has made it possible for people to conduct brutalities unimaginable for those not directly involved. This poses a challenge for future archaeological research in Rwanda, in that the possible uses of archaeological interpretations have to be assessed even more carefully than what would perhaps be the case in a different context. According to Kohl & Fawcett (1995:5) it may be difficult to determine when archaeology has become too politicized and what this entails, as archaeology always

will be connected to politics in one way or another. However, archaeologists have a responsibility to recognize “what they can and cannot reconstruct with reasonable confidence from the archaeological record” (Kohl & Fawcett 1995:8) and to communicate the archaeological material’s limitations.

Chapter 6: Building a national identity in the aftermath of genocide.

“Radically divergent interpretations of history provide the basis upon which collective identities are built and act as powerful justifications of current behavior” (Uvin 1999).

This citation emphasizes the challenges the Rwandan government faces in their handling of the past. History has been used to legitimize discrimination and division in the society from the colonial times and up until the 1994 genocide. Is it possible to present the past in a way that prevents it from being used to divide Rwandans once again? After 1995 history was not a subject in primary or secondary schools due to the contents of the existing curriculum, which was marked by decades of racial and ethnic prejudice.³⁰ It has taken years to agree upon a more uniting and balanced version of the past, and as I am writing this the new history curriculum has been completed. It has taken approximately 15 years for history to reappear in the Rwandan educational system. The construction of a uniting, national identity is crucial in the “new” Rwanda, where ethnic and racial identities are something that belongs to the past. Finding common ground in a shared past is essential to make the population relate to each other and their nation-state (Anderson 2006), and in the following I will discuss how the government has attempted to solve this challenge by looking at the past as presented at museums and genocide memorials. In order to get a better understanding of how the political history and racial/ethnic divisions have shaped the choices made in the construction of a national past, I will compare it with the choices made in Ugandan national presentations of archaeology, history and ethnicity.

6.1 Case study 1: Uganda National Museum.

Uganda National Museum was established in 1908 and moved to its current location in Kampala in 1954. A great deal of the archaeological material had by then been shipped off to the British Museum and the collections were mainly ethnographic and historical (Nyiracyiza 2009:4). Today however, the exhibitions may be categorized in the following groups:

³⁰ Interview with André Ntagwabira, October 30 2009. Place: INMR.

archaeology, geology, paleontology (fossils), colonial history, ethnography, and current. The latter is represented by a temporary exhibition on climate changes. The material spans over several fields of interest, with the ethnographic displays being the most elaborate and extensive. In addition to the exhibition inside, 16 traditional huts have been constructed on the field behind the museum, each of them representing one ethnic group's architecture and culture. The huts are to a varying degree furnished and display utensils, tools, weapons and instruments typically associated with the specific ethnic group (see figures 1, 2 and 3 for an example).

Even though the exhibitions concerning Ugandan prehistory do not take up much room and are not as elaborate as the ethnographic department, it is given more attention than at the National Museum of Rwanda. The visitor at Uganda National Museum is given an overview of the evolution of man from apes (which, as we will see, is not a part of the exhibitions at INMR at all), the developments in Stone Age technology, and ancient man's way of life. The Iron Age is represented by findings from Bigo and Ntuusi, perhaps the most famous archaeological sites in Uganda and a source of great pride for many Ugandans. Both of these sites have been associated with the Bacwezi, a royal dynasty reigning in the west of Uganda from ca 1350-1400 AD.³¹ While some have proposed that the Bacwezi are mythical characters without roots in actual history,³² others have claimed that they were indeed real persons and that they inhabited Bigo and Ntuusi (Rotberg 1965:119-120; Lanning 1953). If we combine the most repeated elements in different versions of the latter hypothesis we may assume that the Bacwezi were a pastoral people migrating into to the west of Uganda from the north – perhaps Ethiopia – around the 14th century AD (Phillipson 2005:292). Bantu speaking peoples had inhabited western Uganda for approximately 300-400 years at that time, and were organized in more or less dominant clans. However, the cattle ideology of the immigrants ensured the subjugation of the Bantus after a short while. Bacwezi were nevertheless in need of the support of the dominant Bantu clans, and the relationship between Bantu and Bacwezi may as such be said to be one of interdependency. It is not entirely clear what happened to the Bacwezi after around 1400 AD; the kingdom might have been weak after king Wamala's constant warfare (and his father's before him) and the diseases these expeditions brought back into Bacwezi territory. The decreasing popularity of the dynasty may have led to migration of Bacwezi and/or their assimilation into surrounding peoples. The present day Bahima, a

³¹ Text explaining the Bigo- and Ntuusi-display at Uganda National Museum.

³² See for example C.C. Wrigley (1958:16): "(...) the Bacwezi never existed except in the imaginations of men".

primarily pastoral people living in the west of Uganda, are commonly associated with the Bacwezi – I was told at the museum that the Bahima are considered to be their direct descendants.³³ Mafeje (1998:12) contradicts this by referring to oral traditions, which does not mention Bahima as kings – they only state that there existed a Bahima aristocracy. It must be mentioned that more recent research has focused on the Bacwezi as spirits – making Bigo and Ntuusi possible ritual sites (Sutton 1993; Robertshaw & Taylor 2000), but it is the abovementioned hypothesis that is made hegemonic through its display at the Uganda National Museum.

The Uganda National Museum's interpretation of Bachwezi is based on oral traditions that have been correlated to archaeological material.³⁴ Would it be possible to communicate at the museum that there exists different versions of the history of Bachwezi, and their connection to Bigo and Ntuusi? By doing so, the museum could encourage its visitors to critical reflection. A consequence of the line of continuity drawn between 14th-15th century Bacwezi – a royal dynasty which increased the kingdom's control through warfare – and present day Bahima is of political nature: Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni is a Muhima, and during a speech in the early 1990s he emphasized the Bacwezi as the founders of what may be understood as an Ugandan “golden era” (Robertshaw & Kamuhangire 1996:740). Museveni has promoted “ethnic neutralization” in Uganda, in contrast to the earlier presidents who have been accused of relying on support from members of their own ethnic groups to a large extent (most importantly by making sure that the government army was composed of members of their own ethnic group) (Salih & Markakis 1998:13). Matters regarding ethnicity are very complex in the Ugandan context as 56 ethnic groups inhabit the nation-state, almost all of them with their own language and distinguishable culture.³⁵ The politicizing of ethnicity caused many of the post-independence conflicts and it seemed an impossible task to create a united Ugandan identity when Museveni became president in 1986.

As part of Museveni's vision of a united Uganda the Penal Code Act of 1988 was passed, making it a criminal offense to make statements (of any kind) or act in ways that could create

³³ Interview with Jackline Nyiracyiza, September 29 and October 1 2009. Place: Uganda National Museum.

³⁴ The archaeological material at Bigo and Ntuusi tells us that the people using the sites engaged in both agricultural and pastoral activities, that they had knowledge about iron working and that the pottery they used was of the roulette-decorated type. I am reluctant to state that it is safe to assume that these were the ancestors of Bahima, even though the Bahima are a mainly pastoral people who probably have inhabited the region for some time.

³⁵ Interview with Jackline Nyiracyiza. September 29 and October 1 2009. Place: Uganda National Museum.

or inspire negative, divisive feelings (Muhereza & Otim 1998:192,196). As I will show later in this thesis, Museveni's law resembles in many ways the law Kagame passed in 2001 in order to prevent and punish divisionist ideology (or "sectarianism"). Has Museveni succeeded in de-politicizing ethnicity (or "de-ethnicize" politics)? The answer is twofold: yes, in the sense that some people feel that recruitment of members of parliament and of the army are based on competence instead of ethnicity, but no, in the sense that some people feel that the President's people (Banjankole and Bahima) are overrepresented in important positions³⁶ and that this fact is under-communicated so as to hide it from the public. However, this is not manifested at the museum, which might represent an "ideal society", not necessarily a reality, where all ethnic groups are presented equally. Hence, while ethnicity is silenced at INMR in Rwanda it is clearly communicated at Uganda National Museum, in some cases to such an extent that other aspects of the past and present have to be omitted. An example of this is the absence of displays concerning the formation of the kingdoms in Uganda (which is a very prominent part of the country's past), as each kingdom was comprised of several ethnic groups. Therefore, the museum chose to focus on the different ethnic groups instead of the kingdoms.³⁷

6.1.1 Ugandan commemoration of past conflicts.

The stability of the country has improved a great deal during Museveni's rule, but there are still enormous problems to be dealt with; the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) and Museveni's government forces have fought violently in the north for several years, causing a humanitarian disaster. Dealing with this part of past and present, as with the devastating effects of the massacres in the Luwero triangle during the civil war, is no doubt challenging. Remains of civilians found in mass graves have previously been returned to their communities for the appropriate burial, but the official remembrance of the events in Luwero is debatable; statues and memorials have been erected for the soldiers and generals who lost their lives in battle, but no such material acknowledgment of civilian suffering and losses exists today (Nyiracyiza 2009:15-16). Are dead civilians not as important as dead soldiers? Is there a conscious choice to emphasize the massacre in the Luwero triangle as a war between two political opponents, between soldiers, rather than a war that affected civilians with no alternative but to be caught in the middle? Is it possible that President Museveni is concerned with his image as a legitimate leader to such a degree that he silences parts of the past that would make it apparent

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

that he in some cases is willing to sacrifice Ugandans in order to make himself more powerful? Either way, the pattern of commemoration bears both a difference and a resemblance to the situation in Rwanda: on one hand the memorializing of civilian deaths in Rwanda far surpasses the one in Uganda, perhaps because close to all deaths and close to all perpetrators in Rwanda were civilian. At the same time it might be argued that the history in Rwanda, as in the Ugandan case, is written by the winners, i.e. the Batutsi-dominated RPF and that this contributes to what is decided to be officially commemorated. In Rwanda, the Batutsi were the targets of genocide and the victims ought no doubt to be memorialized, but there were Bahutu victims of the violence as well (Des Forges 1999)³⁸ – should they not be remembered too? In relation to the commemoration of the Luwero Triangle massacres Nyiracyiza states that: “Such a focus on celebrating a “hero’s acre” and designating civic celebrations of a “hero’s day” show the ways in which the government’s perspectives on recent history strive to emphasize its successful role as a liberating force” (Nyiracyiza 2009:15-16). A parallel may be drawn to the celebration of “Patriotism Day” in Rwanda, which is a national celebration on October 1 dedicated to the 1990 RPF invasion – i.e. the beginning of RPF’s “liberation” of Rwanda. The liberation process “ended” when RPF seized control over Kigali July 4 in 1994, which is celebrated as “National Liberation Day”. Perhaps the main factor in decisions of what to officially remember about past conflicts is the need of persons with political power to legitimize their own position within the conflict and not necessarily the people’s experience(s) of it.

6.2 Case study 2: Kasubi royal tombs and its position within Ugandan history.

Kasubi royal tombs (*Muzibu Azaala Mpanga*) is situated a short drive from Makerere University campus in Kampala, which is a part of the Buganda kingdom. The large, traditional Kasubi hut (figure 4) was built in 1882 and was the home of kabaka Mutesa 1 for two years. Today it is the last resting place of the remains of the four last kings of Buganda; Mutesa 1, Mwanga 2, Daudi Chwa 2 and Mutesa 2. Kasubi royal tombs was the only preserved structure of its kind in Uganda until it burned to the ground on March 17 2010. As in Rwanda, the traditional hut was surrounded by smaller huts with various domestic functions. Up until today, some of the traditions associated with the king’s hut have been kept alive – for instance, upon my visit I noticed several elderly women sitting in the hut, eating

³⁸ Civilians, both Bahutu and Batutsi, were killed as a result of ex-FAR (the former government army) insurgency after the genocide. Several Bahutu civilians were also killed during RPF’s attacks on refugee camps in the DRC after the genocide (Des Forges 1999).

their lunch and weaving mats. I was told that this was the last king's widows and that they spent most of their time in their "husband's" hut.³⁹ The section of the hut opposite to the entrance was separated from the rest by wooden columns and a fence where pictures and memorabilia of the kings were placed (figure 5 and 6). Nobody could walk past this fence except members of the royal family, the kabakas' widows, the kingdom's first lady and the prime minister (www.kasubitombs.org/en/description/muzibu). Behind it was a curtain of bark cloth behind which the kings were buried. The kings' movement from the hut's official space to the secret one behind the curtain symbolized their journey from the living to the dead through "night and forest". The spirits of the ancestors and especially those of the kings are important in Buganda culture, and places where these spirits dwell have been sites of worship and sacrifice up to this day.

The last king with political power, Mutesa 2, was enthroned in 1939 and ruled in the difficult transition between monarchy and republic. He was exiled to England by the British in 1953, but was allowed to return as kabaka two years later. Upon Uganda's independence in 1962 his position transformed from being king of Buganda to president of Uganda (www.kasubitombs.org). However, this did not last long as Milton Obote, then prime minister, overthrew the kabaka-president in 1966. Exiled in England, the kabaka-president later died of unknown cause. The Baganda accused President Obote for having him poisoned in order to make sure that he never returned to power. President Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin in a military coup in 1971, and one of the first tasks of the new president was the repatriation of the former kabaka's remains, which were buried in the Kasubi royal tombs alongside the three other kabakas preceding him. Amin was from the north of Uganda and had as such no real affiliation with Buganda in the south. One possible motivation for bringing the remains of the kabaka back to his people was to win the support of the Baganda, who were (and still are) the largest ethnic group in Uganda. After 8 years of Amin's rule of terror, Obote seized power once again.

In 1986 Yoweri Museveni and his NRA (National Resistance Army) reached Kampala after years of fighting government forces. One interesting move of Museveni was his reinstatement of four of the traditional kingdoms in 1993. These were to be seen as cultural institutions and were not meant to have any political power, even though they in some cases today function as

³⁹ This was organized by system of rotation; groups of wives took turns on being the ones "keeping the king company" in the hut.

intermediaries between the government and the population. Why did the president choose to reinstate kingdoms on his territory? What kind of problems might this cause? Some of the consequences of this choice have already manifested themselves in violent riots. One of these took place in September 2009 when kabaka Mutebi 2 of Buganda wanted to travel to a part of his kingdom to greet his people. The government argued that he was not safe in that part of the kingdom as the people who live there did not support the kabaka. Hence, they denied him access to this part of Buganda (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles). People were furious, ran to the streets to demonstrate against the decision, and following altercations between civilians and the police 21 people were killed by stray bullets. Another violent clash between civilians and the police occurred in March 2010 after President Museveni was denied access to the fire at Kasubi Royal Tombs by demonstrators. The relationship between the kabaka and the president is somewhat tense and appears to be a power struggle waiting to take an even more violent form. The kabaka, and the Baganda who support him, feels entitled to political power, something the president has denied him (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8572588.stm>). A spokesperson for the Buganda kingdom was asked by a BBC reporter what he thought could be the cause of the fire at Kasubi, upon which he answered that it had to be the work of “enemies of the king”. When asked about the rumors claiming that President Museveni was behind the fire in order to weaken the Buganda king’s power, the spokesperson would not confirm or disprove this, but once again stated that “enemies of the king” were to blame (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2010/03/100317_uganda_nh_sl.shtml). Upon visiting the Kasubi royal tombs in late September 2009 I got the impression by the guide showing me the tombs that this was *Buganda* history, this was something that showed their greatness, and that Baganda took great pride in their past. He talked about Buganda as though it was not a part of Uganda, as though it was independent and superior to other parts of the country – and that this should be reflected in the political organization of Uganda. Considering the importance Kasubi Royal Tombs has in the context of “Baganda pride” and Baganda identity it is indeed worrisome if the rumor of President Museveni’s participation in its destruction gains popularity among the Baganda.

Buganda has been a powerful kingdom for several centuries, even during the colonial years. This was due to their co-operation with the British, which made the enemies of Buganda enemies of the British as well. The problem for Baganda was not seen in their relationship to the British, but in their role in a larger unit; the thought of being just one of many ethnic

groups in a united, independent Uganda was not at all popular (Ingham 1990:12-13). This form of “Baganda pride” is still something tangible and relevant in Uganda today. It manifests itself in the confrontations between Baganda and the Ugandan government concerning the kingdom’s position in a national context. Focusing on the history of Buganda, for instance the Kasubi royal tombs and the former kings, seems to be motivated not only by heritage concerns, but also by a desire to give the current kingdom a sense of continuance. This seems to trigger a feeling of legitimacy to the Baganda claim for political power. In this respect it differs from the role of the royal palace in Nyanza; as will be discussed later in this thesis, Rwandans in general appear to see the monarchy as something belonging to the past. What they seek to pass on and internalize through educating people about the royal history is the values and behavior that dominated in that era. As Smith (2004:204) states: “(...) the aims of nationalists, which are not to recreate the past in the present, but to use its example as an inspiration and means for renewing decayed or fragmented societies, so as to make them viable and confident in the face of the pressures of modernity”. While Rwandans might be inspired by elements of their monarchical past, this is not seen as the past in the Bugandan context; Buganda is still a monarchy even though it is a monarchy without political power. Drawing on their past greatness and power, a reinstatement of the political kingdom would be a legitimate claim for the Baganda. While the monarchical past is likely to be part of ongoing claims for political power in both Uganda and Rwanda, it may also be said to have a more inspirational use in Rwanda as the reestablishment of pre-colonial values is attempted.

6.3 Case study 3: The National Museum of Rwanda.

The National Museum of Rwanda (figure 7), located in Butare (now Huye) was opened in September 1987. This marked the completion of a process initiated 40 years earlier. Belgium was a part of this process to such a degree that it was Belgium’s king, Baudouin 1, who in 1970 – 8 years after Rwanda became an independent republic – made a promise to arrange for a national museum to be built. Internal political problems delayed the actual building, but since its completion the National Museum have become the head quarter of national museums in Rwanda: Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (INMR) (Misago & Van Pee 2008:11). The government has in recent years emphasized the importance of protecting and raising awareness about Rwandan cultural heritage (Kagame in Misago & Van Pee 2008:6). This has led to four other museums being established in Kigali and Nyanza: Window of Museum of Museums of Rwanda, The Museum of Natural History, The Museum of Rwandan Ancient

History⁴⁰ and Rwesero Arts Museum. The Museum of Environment is an ongoing project, the construction is scheduled next year and the museum will be located in Kibuye (now Karongi). At INMR I was also informed about the plan to build a Peace Museum in the north of Rwanda. The museum would, as its name indicates, be dedicated to themes concerning peace and reconciliation after the genocide. However, this is still on the idea-level; problems concerning the financial part and exactly what kind of material to display at such a museum, have to be solved first.⁴¹

6.3.1 What is exhibited and why?

The exhibitions at the National Museum of Rwanda cover a time span from the Stone Age to modern times, represented by more recent, traditional Rwandan arts and crafts. The latter category is especially well represented: basketry and wickerwork make up a large part of the exhibition, and the visitors also get a demonstration of how it is done by women employed by the museum. Traditional tools, weapons, musical instruments – particularly the ritual drums – and clothing are all represented. A traditional hut is reconstructed inside the museum and a larger, enclosed hut with associated huts for storage, cooking, etc., is reconstructed outside on the museum's premises (figure 8). This gives an excellent insight in the traditional Rwandan building techniques and materials, as well as the social organization of the household. Some space is dedicated to the royal history, giving the visitor an introduction to the chronology of kings and the role they had in Rwandan society. The tomb of king Cyirima 2 Rujugira, who died around 1708, is also a part of the exhibition. Originally, the king's skeleton was laid out in a glass mount with his grave goods around him, but protesters claimed that this treatment was unworthy for a king (Nyiracyiza 2009:14). Therefore, the skeleton is now kept in one of the museum's storage rooms, with only the grave goods⁴² on display. In addition, more recent developments within the museum show a move towards presenting the past as something socially beneficial: "The Art of Communication" and the Mobile Museum are two examples of this. The first is an exhibition that was almost ready to be set up in the museum in November 2009, which concerns the Rwandan traditions involved in the handling of conflicts.

⁴⁰ This is the former residence of king Rudahigwa with Rwandan traditional royal huts reconstructed on its premises. There are no exhibitions on what I associate with ancient history, hence I will refer to this museum as The Royal Palace in Nyanza.

⁴¹ Karen Knipp-Rentrop at INMR pointed out that it is very difficult to create a Peace Museum without it turning into a War Museum; are we able to speak of peace without mentioning war and how does peace materialize in a way that is possible to display at a museum?

⁴² Iron anvils/rods, cowry-shells, beads, weapons (spear and knife), etc. All of it sending messages of the king's powers, both creative and destructive.

Mobile Museum is a project that addresses the problem of many schools in taking their pupils to the museum, so the museum is coming to them instead. The history and the past are brought to people, making the knowledge more accessible. Mobile Museum also arranges days at the museum for school-classes, where they can learn traditional cooking, dancing, drumming, etc. One of the important aims of the project is to create an environment of discussion among the pupils, to make them aware of traditional values and traditional ways of handling conflicts:⁴³ “It aims to rehabilitate Rwandans, by revisiting cultural values” (Misago & Van Pee 2008:13).

As a whole, the exhibitions give the viewer a great deal of information on Rwandan geology, culture, arts and crafts, and history. However, what surprised me was the archaeological information; what happened to the Rwandan Stone Age and Iron Age? Are the few hand axes, the shards of pottery, and the brief introductions to the different periods and to iron-working techniques all there is to be said about these thousands of years of Rwandan past (see figure 9)? Throughout the displays concerning the prehistory, the emphasis is on technology, whether it is stone, iron or pottery. Hardly anything is said about social organization or economic adaptations.

As I have discussed earlier in this thesis, questions concerning the Bantu-expansions were given quite a lot of attention by both archaeologists and linguists, especially from the 1960s onwards. The main focus of these studies tended to be the origin of the Bantu, the chronology of the migrations and what these entailed with regards to innovations and adaptations in subsistence, technology and social organization. Some of the theories concerning the Bantu-expansions have emphasized the impact Bantu-speaking peoples had on the lives of the peoples they encountered in the areas they migrated into – that is to say; some scholars have seen the Bantus as a civilizing force,⁴⁴ resembling that of the colonial powers. There are still many aspects of the Bantu-expansions that are not fully understood today, but what we know with a large degree of certainty is that Bantu is a group of languages that have a common origin. At some point in time, probably not more than 2000 years ago, did Bantu-speaking peoples migrate (exactly from where is still debatable, but possibly from the Cameroon-

⁴³ Interview with André Ntagwabira, October 30 2009. Place: INMR.

⁴⁴ See for example Hiernaux (1968:514). However, the alleged superiority of Hamitic-speaking peoples including Batutsi, as discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis, must be kept in mind.

Nigeria highlands), which in due time led to the spread of and variations in the Bantu-language (Oliver 1966).

The Bantus were in the 1900s seen as the ancestors of the Bahutu, while Hamites (and sometimes Nilotes) were the ancestors of the Batutsi (Murdock 1959:350; Hiernaux 1968:513-514; Taylor 1999:56). Therefore, statements concerning the influence of Bantu with regards to technology, subsistence and social organization, and *when* Bantu-speaking peoples settled in Rwanda, would at the same time be statements concerning modern-day Bahutu's place in society. Did so-called Hamitic-speaking peoples, i.e. Batutsi, already inhabit Rwanda when Bantu-Bahutu arrived? Who were the "real" indigenous population of Rwanda? And what innovations did the different groups bring to the society? Questions like these are no doubt politically important as they may be – and indeed were – used to legitimize modern social organization. The question of origin is especially a tense one; "we were here first" is an argument frequently used to back up claims to land and other resources, not only in the case of Rwanda.

When we take into consideration the conflicts that have surrounded questions concerning Bantu and the negative connotations of migration-hypothesis, I assumed that the displays dealing with these subjects would be very explicit at the museum in order to avoid unwanted interpretations or misunderstandings. Therefore, I was surprised when I was told by museum staff that this was not seen as a very interesting part of Rwanda's past.⁴⁵ This part of the past had been turned into something that seemed to be unimportant and depoliticized. It appears to be so because the naturalizing of the past has been very successful, i.e. the official version of Bantus' role in prehistory has been widely accepted and seems unquestionable. Perhaps is this partially due to the fact that it is a very *uniting* version, as the present discourse claims a *common origin for all Rwandans*. The Bantu migrations that took place in the Iron Age represents the "settling" of Rwanda; only a "few families" inhabited Rwanda before the Iron Age and hence the people who migrated into the area in the Iron Age encountered an almost uninhabited country.⁴⁶ This creates a "clean slate" situation where all Iron Age and post-Iron Age developments can be interpreted as internal developments within a Bantu population. This could be seen as a reaction to the political situation in past and present Rwanda: it is a diplomatic solution to the problem of indigenous and non-indigenous which in many ways

⁴⁵ Personal comment by André Ntagwabira, September 2009. Place: INMR.

⁴⁶ Personal comment by a representative from Mainz museum, October 5 2009. Place: INMR.

eliminates the dilemmas that could have occurred in presentations of Iron Age migrations. In this interpretation of the past Bahutu and Batutsi are irrelevant categories as they are seen as mainly colonial constructs. The pre-colonial Bahutu and Batutsi are seen as socio-economic categories, and a specific “Bahutu” or “Batutsi” material culture is therefore not visible.⁴⁷ Hence, Bahutu and Batutsi are not relevant categories in a museum context. According to André Ntagwabira, theories concerning Iron Age migrations may constitute a more extensive part of the exhibitions in the future, but this would be dependent on more research being conducted and more knowledge being produced. He claims that migrations may also become a uniting element for Rwandans, once the old racial and ethnic theories have been replaced by ones based on scientific research.⁴⁸

It is important to remember that the aim of museums in general has been to reflect the lived reality of their “targeted group of visitors”, while at the same time give them information that expands and adds a new dimension to this reality. Do the exhibitions at the National Museum compromise this by avoiding mentioning Bahutu and Batutsi? After all, these categories are most certainly a part of Rwandan reality today. It is a part of reality that has a great deal of negative connotations which misuses of archaeology and history have contributed to. The current problem of how to relate to questions of ethnicity is reflected in the museum exhibitions by its absence. This has not always been the case though: the museum catalogue from 2003 mentions Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi as the three social groups inhabiting Rwanda, and that these categories were infused with a new and discriminatory meaning in the colonial era (Misago & Mesas 2003). It is apparent that the museum felt it necessary to explain to the visitors that Bahutu and Batutsi are not static categories, but rather constructions that have changed over time and according to the needs of different political contexts. This is an important point to be explained and transmitted to the Rwandan public. However, this is not a part of the new museum catalogue: what happened in the years between 2003 and 2008 that made the Batwa, Bahutu and Batutsi disappear from the narrative at the museum?

One important event preceding the popular election of President Paul Kagame in 2003 was the passing of a new law concerning “divisionist” ideology. The law states that any statements or actions interpretable as supportive of genocide ideology, i.e. statements or actions that maintain a division between Bahutu and Batutsi, are punishable (www.amategeko.net, see

⁴⁷ Interview with Professor Kanimba Misago, October 29 2009. Place: INMR.

⁴⁸ Interview with André Ntagwabira, October 30 2009. Place: INMR.

especially Law No. 47/2001 on 18/12/2001 on prevention, suppression and punishment of the crime of discrimination and sectarianism, articles 1.2, 8 and 9). The removal of Bahutu and Batutsi from the museum context may reflect this new political situation, in which extra care has to be taken when dealing with the categories – especially as the museum is a place where the “right” knowledge is transmitted. Also, what is present at the museum is what is worth remembering. We have to ask ourselves what an official act of forgetting Bahutu and Batutsi serves and what message this sends to the Rwandan public. Would it not be possible to give an historical overview of the different meanings of Bahutu and Batutsi? This means avoiding the more speculative theories that seek the origin of Bahutu and Batutsi, and that traces these categories as far back as the early Iron Age – as was indeed accomplished with the pre-2008 exhibition. What could be gained by presenting Bahutu and Batutsi, as lived identities of Rwandans, at the National Museum and not solely in the context of genocide, such as at the Kigali Memorial Center? Perhaps this could give an added dimension to their sense of self, and help recreate Bahutu and Batutsi as cultural, rather than political, identities. To induce the categories with a “new” meaning, which does not compromise a Rwandan civic and political identity, might be a more lasting solution than attempting their eradication.

The narrative at INMR is one that promotes a national, as opposed to an ethnic or a racial, identity. This is partly achieved by eliminating “Bahutu” and “Batutsi” from this narrative. With the changes made in the exhibitions after 2003 there has been no official acknowledgment of the fact that there are different ways to interpret the past and that the one presented is only one of them – one that the authorities find more likely than the others. It is not common for museums in general to explain the choices they have made to their visitors, but in the Rwandan context it could be important to be explicit about the reasons for a non-communication of ethnicity. This could contribute to clarify to the visitors that they have a choice when it comes to how they want to perceive the past and how they identify themselves – making up their own minds do not necessarily make them divisive citizens or potential *génocidaires*.

It seems as though the focus of the National Museum is what we may call the late pre-colonial era, i.e. the end of the 1800s, and especially pre-colonial values, social relations and conflict handling are transmitted to the visitors (very often to school classes through Mobile Museum). A parallel is hence drawn between the past and the future, where solutions to

current problems are being sought in the Rwandan cultural heritage.⁴⁹ The message is: if they were able to solve their conflicts peacefully then, why should we not be able to do the same today? The current projects at the museum seem to underline the desire to invoke traditional values, which probably would not have been given as much relevance outside of the post-genocide context. As such, they are examples of the influence a certain political situation has on the past – the past is not seen as something meaningful in itself, it has to be made relevant in this specific socio-political milieu.

The pre-colonial era is no doubt an important part of the Rwandan past, but it seems to be communicated at the expense of Rwandan prehistory, such as the Stone Age and the Iron Age. The reasons for the choices made in the exhibitions may partially be found in the tendency of previous colonies to emphasize the more recent part of their past⁵⁰ and hence more ethnographic material, as observed at the INMR. Hence, Rwanda's status as a former colony is an important factor in the choices made at the museum, but so is the post-1959 political history. Also, it is a fact that most of the archaeological excavations in Rwanda were conducted by foreigners in the years preceding independence. As a result of this, a great deal of the interpretations, as well as the archaeological material in itself, has been brought out of the country.⁵¹ Nevertheless, it would be interesting if the archaeological material available in the museum's collection was incorporated in the exhibitions, so as to enhance the visitors' knowledge of Rwandan Stone Age and Iron Age. Material from Giblin and Humphris'⁵² more recent work in Rwanda may prove very important in a potential extension of the archaeological displays at the museum.

6.4 Case study 4: The Royal Palace in Nyanza.

King Musinga reigned during the early years of colonialism, but had to give up the throne in 1931 to his son Mutara 3 Rudahigwa.⁵³ The new king then moved the capital of the kingdom to Rukari, in the Nyanza area – a hill just adjacent to the former capital. The area had however been the location of the kingdom's capital from the late 1800s (Misago 2008). The royal

⁴⁹ Interview with André Ntagwabira, October 30 2009. Place: INMR.

⁵⁰ The colonial years are seen by many as a time when values and traditions were "demoralized" (Audrey Richards: 1969 *The Multicultural States of East Africa*, McGill-Queen's University Press, London). Focusing on the late pre-colonial past may therefore be seen as a way of "re-moralizing" values, traditions and hence society.

⁵¹ Interview with Professor Kanimba Misago, October 29 2009. Place: INMR.

⁵² See Jane Humphris "Iron Production in Southern Rwanda: a Summary of Recent Research" in *Nyame Akuma*, No. 70. December 2008, for information on her research in Rwanda.

⁵³ See chapter 1 for an introduction to the pre-colonial and colonial kings.

palace that was built for king Mutara 3 Rudahigwa at Rukari marked a departure from the traditional royal residences with its clearly European features; its three sides encloses a backyard, the longest part of the palace contains the bedrooms and living-rooms, one of the shorter sides is for bathrooms and the king's garage, while the second shorter side contains the kitchen. The front of the building is decorated with an almost monumental entrance and a gallery, which runs across the whole length of the building (figure 10). The king resided in this palace until he had to flee due to the unstable political situation preceding the Social Revolution. He died before the actual revolution, some say by the hands of the Belgians.⁵⁴ He never got to move into the newly built palace at Rwesero – the hill adjacent to the courtyard of the palace at Rukari. This building has in recent years been turned into the Rwesero Arts Museum, which houses works by Rwandan artists – both past and present. Many of the artists address the genocide by expressing themes of sorrow, reconciliation and hope.

On the premises of the Rukari royal palace several traditional royal huts have been reconstructed (figure 11). These are the type of huts that the kings preceding Rudahigwa would have resided in, and differ from the ordinary huts (such as the one on INMR's premises) mainly in size and number. In addition to the king's hut, the royal compound would have huts for milk, for beer, for wives, for children and for servants. The latter ones, as well as huts for important chiefs, could be located outside the fence of the actual royal compound (Misago 2008).

6.4.1 Its position within a national narrative.

The current interest in royal history may at first seem as contradicting the aim of establishing a national narrative that unites the Rwandan population. After all, in the years between 1959 and 1994 the monarchy, as presented in extremist-propaganda, symbolized the Batutsi's alleged superiority and oppression of the Bahutu. Propaganda took advantage of and fed on Bahutu's fear of the reinstatement of Batutsi monarchy, and victims of the violence following the Social Revolution were often Batutsi known to be close to the royal court (Waugh 2004). This was to a certain degree also the case in 1994, when king Mutara 3 Rudahigwa's wife Rosalie was killed in her home on April 22. It would seem as almost a provocation by the current government to pay such attention to royal history, when it symbolized a great deal of the division that had existed between Batutsi and Bahutu. Nevertheless, my impression is that

⁵⁴ Interview with Professor Paul Rutayisire, September 15 2009. Place: Centre for Conflict Management.

this part of Rwanda's past is something many people take great pride in – there is even a student club at the National University in Butare dedicated to Rwandan royal history.

King Rudahigwa is celebrated as a national hero, which was quite surprising to me because of his cooperation with the Belgian colonial administration. What seemed contradicting to me was explained by Professor Paul Rutayisire: King Rudahigwa did cooperate with the Belgians, but considering the circumstances he had no other choice. It benefitted the people that he worked with the Belgians, as opposing them would surely have led to his dethronement. The king was known to promote equality among Rwandans and this is probably what led to his death – assuming that the rumor of Belgian involvement in his death has some truth to it. It is generally believed that if king Rudahigwa had lived through the independence he would have altered the relationship between Bahutu and Batutsi, saving the lives lost in racial and ethnic conflicts.⁵⁵ It is difficult to assess whether or not this scenario is likely, but it suffices to remember that a sharp distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi had been institutionalized during Rudahigwa's reign. This way of identifying oneself and others based on ethnicity existed and would not easily have disappeared. In addition, the majority of the population resented the Batutsi-dominated monarchy and would probably not have celebrated the Batutsi-king as a hero upon independence.

The formation of the Nyiginya kingdom and the complex form the social organization took from the 15th century onwards is intriguing, both archaeologically and historically. Unfortunately, most of the earlier research on this period has focused on migrations and relations between Bahutu and Batutsi. The current interest is more concerned with emphasizing interaction, and most of all the traditional values that made the kingdom expand and develop. Joseph Habineza, the Rwandan Minister of Sports and Culture, writes in the preface of the museum catalogue *The Formation of Rwanda from the 15th Century*:

The site in Nyanza is registered in our general policy for safeguarding the past in a bid to consider culture as the basis of development and the salvation of our Rwandan identity. (...) Nyanza has been chosen to remind us of the role played by the Nyiginya monarchs in the growth and unification of Rwanda, an expansion that was stopped by the penetration of Europeans at the end of the 19th century. (...) Our history is made up of examples of courage and a sense of dignity which should be followed by all Rwandans. (...) That nice exhibition

⁵⁵ Ibid.

enlightens our vision of constructing a harmonious development of our country on the basis of our cultural values (Habineza in Misago 2008:8).

The quote above explains some of the reasons why royal history has such an important place in the Rwandan narrative; as was the case at the National Museum of Rwanda, it is believed that this part of the past may provide Rwandans with the pride and values they need to be “efficient citizens”. It is also indicated that if the colonial power had not interfered when they did, Rwanda would have continued the process of expansion and unification it had begun centuries earlier. The official discourse implies that copying values and behavior from this era will make the kingdom turned republic once again prosper and grow, and the unifying process that was halted by Europeans can now be resumed in a somewhat different manner. The pre-colonial social relationships are seen as something today’s Rwandans can learn from in order to build a peaceful society.⁵⁶

An alternative motivation for the recent focus on the old monarchy could be that it offers a way for the Batutsi-dominated government to subtly give its right to “the crown” some legitimacy. Is it possible that the communication of royal history creates an association between President Kagame and the Nyiginya monarchs, in their (alleged) dedication to “(...) the growth and unification of Rwanda” (ibid.)? In drawing parallels to past Batutsi-dominated monarchies President Kagame, being a Mututsi, may create some sort of continuance from the great kingdom to the republic rising from the ashes. The act of removing the skeleton of king Cyirima from its display at INMR could be seen in relation to a subtle communication of past and present power; the bodily remains of the Mututsi-king are hidden from the public, so as to present the individual as unimportant, yet it is general knowledge that the king was Mututsi. The kingship institution, power and Batutsi are all intertwined in people’s minds even though the “Batutsi-element” is no longer communicated in contexts such as the royal tomb at INMR.

I am not in a position to draw any conclusions on this matter, but it is important to remember that whatever the government’s motivation is, it is my impression that people do relate to and acquire a sense of pride from this part of Rwanda’s past. In the Rwandan case these feelings appear to be even more important than in a country without their past, because there is so much pain and shame attached to the recent parts of their history – which is the one Rwanda is primarily known for. Hence, the current “need” for a Rwandan “golden era” could be a

⁵⁶ Personal communication with employee at Kigali Memorial Centre, September 21 2009. Place: Kigali Memorial Centre.

direct consequence of the recent political events – without racial and ethnic conflict there would not be a need to search for something in the past to replace existing values and behavioral patterns with. Royal history would probably have been historically and archaeologically interesting in itself, but it would not have the social significance and importance that it has to the population if not for the recent conflicts.

6.5 Case study 5: The Kigali Memorial Centre.

The Kigali Memorial Centre is situated on Gisozi hill, a quiet part of Rwanda's capital Kigali (figure 12). The museum is surrounded by beautiful gardens, which gives an atmosphere of peace and contemplation to a place where 250.000 victims – many of them remain unidentified – of the genocide have found their last resting place. The museum was inaugurated in 2004 – ten years after the genocide (www.kigalimemorialcenter.org). During the opening week 1500 people visited the museum each day, many of them survivors paying their respect to the ones they lost or remembering those months of 1994. Some of the survivors were invited to visit the museum before its official opening. Most of them broke down in shock and overwhelming grief as they were confronted with traumas that had never been dealt with professionally and that probably will stay with them for the rest of their lives (<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/06/1081222465951.html>).

6.5.1 Description of the exhibitions and the museum's stated aim.

The exhibitions begin with an introduction to the time just before the arrival of the Europeans, with Rwandans presented as one people who shared language, culture and territory. The categories Bahutu and Batutsi existed, but only as socio-economic markers – the categories were flexible and did not represent conflict. The latter changed as a result of measures taken by the colonial powers, which favored Batutsi in terms of education and therefore future possibilities of influential positions.⁵⁷ It is argued that this created the divisions in Rwandan society that led to ethnic violence and genocide.

The next part of the exhibition is dedicated to the hundred days of the genocide. Weapons used during the massacres, such as machetes, spiked clubs and various blunt objects, are displayed. A picture of a group of smiling people is one of the first things the visitor's attention is drawn to. A man and a woman are identified and the text beneath the picture

⁵⁷ See chapter 1 for discussion.

explains that the displayed chain was used to immobilize the two when they were buried alive. A video-clip shows a person being attacked with a machete, corpses by the roadside, the half-decayed bodies of small children and the wounds of survivors. Kigali Memorial Centre states that approximately 1 million Batutsi were killed during the three months the genocide lasted.⁵⁸ The methods used to kill them are described and a video-clip where some of the survivors recall how their loved ones were murdered is shown. The international community's unwillingness to act both before and during the genocide is commented upon, and according to this the foreign resources used to evacuate expatriates would have been enough to have ended the genocide after only a few days. Even more regrettable and shameful is the fact that UNAMIR⁵⁹ could have been able to prevent the genocide and hence saved over a million Rwandan lives if they had been given mandate to act, and the resources they requested, sooner or at all.

The transition from this part of the exhibition to the third, and last one on this floor, depicts the opposition to the genocide: Batutsi who fought their aggressors with whatever means they had available and individuals who risked their own lives hiding – and thereby saving – Batutsi. The exhibition also addresses the aftermath of the genocide, with long term consequences such as orphans, women who were raped and infected with HIV, the question of punishing a large number of perpetrators, and how to build a common future for all Rwandans. Education is seen as an important foundation for the latter challenge; by learning about the genocide, its causes, and non-violent ways to solve conflicts the government is hoping to create a better prepared and more united generation of Rwandans. Most of the genocide memorials in Rwanda have educational centers on their premises as a result of this.

In addition to this history of the genocide, a room is dedicated to some of the victims of genocide: their family members have donated pictures of the ones they have lost, which have been hung on the walls of small compartments of the room where the visitor can sit down and watch the photographs. A video is also played: survivors are sharing their memories of family-members or friends that were killed – what their personality was like, what kind of relationship they had, and their last memory of the deceased person. The next room displays

⁵⁸ Throughout the exhibitions the Kigali Memorial Centre is explicit when saying that Bahutu were the perpetrators and Batutsi the victims. The number of 1 million Batutsi being killed is not exaggerated, as the death-toll is still not agreed upon, but this is the highest estimate.

⁵⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.

several skulls and bones in show-cases, followed by a room of personal effects collected from mass graves around Kigali.

The second floor of the museum contains a children's memorial and the "Wasted Lives" exhibition. The children's memorial displays large photographs of some of the victims of the Rwandan genocide, with their name, age, interests, favorite food, and cause of death stated beneath it. In this room too, family members are allowed to put up photographs of the children they lost. The "Wasted Lives" exhibition presents the history of genocide in non-Rwandan contexts; the killings of Herero in Namibia by German colonialists, Holocaust, the killing of "political opponents" in Cambodia, the Armenian genocide of 1915, and the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia during the Balkan war in the early 1990s. The visitor is given an introduction to these events; when, where, how and to a certain extent why they occurred. There are important differences between the genocides, but the main objective is the same: to exterminate "the other" completely.

6.5.2 Discussion of the exhibitions at Kigali Memorial Centre.

The term "genocide" is made up of two Greek words: *genos* meaning race and *-cide* meaning killer or the act of killing. Hence, it is applied to actions leading to the death of a particular race or people. Genocide was first used in 1944 to describe the Third Reich's attempt to exterminate all Jews (<http://www.enotes.com/history-fact-finder/war-conflict-twentieth-century/what-was-origin-term-genocide>). As such, one is always reminded of Holocaust in some way or the other when the word genocide is applied. By contextualizing the Rwandan genocide through the "Wasted Lives" exhibition a wider perspective is achieved; the 1994 events are unique in some ways, but not in its entirety. By removing some of the "uniqueness" of the Rwandan genocide it is made relevant to a wider audience – genocide is not something that concerns only Bahutu, Batutsi, Germans or Jews, it affects every human being because it is a threat to values and qualities we pride ourselves in calling human. The Rwandan genocide is made into a somewhat shared experience, even though it is impossible for people not directly affected by it to understand it completely. Showing the complexity and variations of genocide may contribute to creating awareness and reflection amongst the visitors, making them better equipped to recognize early signs of potentially dangerous divisions in the society. Genocides are dependent upon governmental support in order to be carried out "efficiently", i.e. to mobilize people and dehumanize the parts of the population who are perceived as the enemy. The ability to critically reflect upon for example government policies

is therefore an important part of genocide prevention. The “Wasted Lives” exhibition may be seen as part of an awareness and prevention project, directed not only towards Rwanda but the international community. The lack of international awareness and interference enabled the Rwandan genocide, as the violence was discussed in international media as being a result of tribal hatred and hence something “irrational” and “typically African”.⁶⁰ The exhibition emphasizes that genocide does not always take the industrialized form of Holocaust, it is not exclusively European – it is a global phenomenon.

Another consequence of adding the “Wasted Lives” exhibition to a memorial mainly concerning the Rwandan genocide is the contribution this seems to make to the construction of a transcultural memory, in the sense that the visitors are encouraged to use other genocides as a framework for their understanding of this particular genocide. This in turn may create what I would like to call a specific genocide remembrance in which we are equipped with a certain way of understanding this form of violence. The problem with this genocide remembrance could be that we have expectations to genocide as a definition; we automatically focus on the general and comparable aspects of genocide, while “weeding out” the particularities that do not fit in. Lemarchand (2008b:404) claim that understanding the Rwandan genocide through Holocaust may lead to less focus on the distinct mechanisms leading up to 1994, which in turn may obscure or create misunderstandings concerning the motivations for the killings. Because of this I would say that the Kigali Memorial Centre has a responsibility when addressing world-wide genocide in emphasizing the differences between them, the diverse historical and political backgrounds, organizations and executions, so as to transmit that the term genocide includes more than a specific genocide that all others are measured up against. In addressing the general tendency to compare Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda, Lemarchand (2008b:406) claims that another problem that arises is the construction of a collective identity among Batutsi as a “chosen people”, because of their historically privileged status. Lemarchand does not specify why this is problematic, but having a “chosen people” in any nation-state comprising more than one ethnic group might pose a challenge in the way this identity is made socially and politically relevant without creating divisions. Hence, the identity construction that the “Wasted Lives” exhibition facilitates could potentially be inspiring the opposite of its stated aim of unity, because it

⁶⁰ The massacres in Rwanda were understood as genocide by several international actors who were members of the UN. Explicitly calling it a genocide would however have forced these actors to intervene according to the UN convention of 1948 (<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>). The reluctance to do so has been partly attributed to the failed UN actions in Somalia in 1992 (see Dallaire 2004).

enables an association between the Jews, a people who have suffered and who are said to be chosen by God, and the Batutsi.

As in genocide discourse in general, “Never again” is an important part of the museum’s stated aim; it is believed that remembering the genocide of 1994 will help prevent that such atrocities will ever happen again. At the same time it is a testimony of the events and the people who suffered during those months. The “real” witnesses are unable to testify as they were all killed, but because of the scale and the public nature of the killings many Rwandans experienced the violence firsthand and may as such also be termed witnesses. The government has by permitting the establishment of this museum chosen to not let Rwandans forget about the genocide and the traumas they experienced. Choosing not to forget also means choosing what to remember and how this ought to be done. In order to create a foundation for a peaceful and reconciled Rwanda, the divisions and social ruptures in the society must be remembered in a way that encourages the opposite feelings, i.e. tolerance and unity. We have to ask ourselves what kind of identities that are being constructed at sites such as the Kigali Memorial Centre and whether or not this kind of remembrance can be excluding or discriminatory.

What became apparent to me upon visiting the memorial centre was the emphasis given to foreign actions or, rather, inactions; as in official discourse in general, the western world at large and the colonial power more specifically are given the blame for violence and social rupture in Rwanda. However, it is highly unlikely that there existed no strife between commoners and the elite before the Europeans arrived (Prunier 1999:39), as Rwanda may have been a stratified society since at least the 15th century. This is not to say that the colonial division between Bahutu and Batutsi was a continuation of earlier structures, because both the Germans and the Belgians introduced elements to the dichotomy that created a new and violent situation.

By claiming a harmonious pre-colonial past the government gives the impression that all Rwandans at all times have lived peacefully side by side and therefore that this is possible in the future. Hopefully this will be accomplished, but are misrepresentations of the past necessary, or even a fruitful way, to achieve this? Is the solution to blame only the external factors rather than addressing the internal issues that contributed to the problems? After all, it must be remembered that the First and Second Republic further divided Bahutu and Batutsi in

order to divert the masses from internal problems that were either caused by the government itself or which the government was unable to solve. According to Lemarchand (2008a:65-67), the current ban on public mention of ethnicity and the acknowledgement of the different perspectives this might give on the past is an obstacle to reconciliation. The government's strategy of banning ethnicity, blaming colonialism and presenting a peaceful pre-colonial past may contradict many Rwandans' perception and create a tension between official and unofficial perspectives. The government has been criticized for not accounting for the "unofficial memories", for example the ones that does not glorify the RPF's role in the genocide and its aftermath (Lemarchand 2008a). RPF has been accused of attacking refugee-camps in the DRC under the pretence that *génocidaires* were hiding among the civilians. Some have seen the attacks as government-led "Batutsi-revenge" and not as legitimate military operations, as claimed by the RPF. What is beyond doubt is the number of civilian losses and we may ask: where are the memorials for these 200.000 Bahutu who were killed in RPF-led "search-and-destroy" operations targeted at refugee camps in 1996 and 1997 (Lemarchand 2008a:71)?

This part of the recent history could possibly be included in the exhibitions at Kigali Memorial Centre, as it is as much a direct consequence of the genocide as HIV and the number of orphans is. The choice of not doing so has political consequences; it enables the RPF, now the Rwandan Democratic Front, to present itself as a liberating force and the bulwark against a new genocide. A flower-arrangement laid down on one of the mass-graves on the memorial centre's premises read "RDF will continue to make sure that genocide never happens again", which to me suggests that RDF's political power to a large degree rests on exactly this perception of the past (figure 13). This creates a biased collective remembrance in which Batutsi are forever victims, Bahutu are forever perpetrators and the RPF is forever liberators of Rwanda (Lemarchand 2008a). It is this bias that is potentially dangerous as it may create two ethnic versions of the past: one of "Bahutu-suffering"⁶¹ and one of "Batutsi-victims vs. Bahutu-perpetrators". It is the latter version that is communicated through public commemoration and discourse, which potentially excludes a large part of the Rwandan population who remembers differently from what the government wants them to. For example, the guides at the Kigali Memorial Centre are Batutsi survivors. This gives them

⁶¹ By this I mean a historical narrative concerning Bahutu's victimization during colonial rule, and the lack of recognition of their sufferings during and after the genocide. In the context of genocide it must however be pointed out that while Batutsi were killed as a group, the Bahutu were killed as individuals.

authority and credibility vis-à-vis a visitor which is no doubt legitimate, but we have to remember that their memories are only some of many memories – being survivors do not automatically mean that they are in possession of “the Truth”. Rather, they are in possession of their personal experiences of what happened, which is part of the collective memory of victims as a group. The Batutsi survivors represent the targets of the genocide; they were indeed the victims and should be acknowledged as such in official commemoration. After all, it would not have been possible to call the massacres in Rwanda genocide had it not been for Bahutu perpetrators and Batutsi victims. However, would it be possible to include other perspectives and other experiences at the Kigali Memorial Centre? By this I mean Bahutu’s recollections of the events – not necessarily as either victims or perpetrators, but as Rwandans experiencing the violence. This might be a necessity as discussing and sharing memories could create a better understanding of the events of 1994. An extreme consequence of the exclusionary memory practice was seen in 2008, when a grenade killed a police guard at the Kigali Memorial Centre – the article covering the story stated that some Bahutu were frustrated by the intense memorializing of Batutsi victims and survivors, as this “enforces a perception of collective guilt against their ethnic group” (<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL115378820080411>).

6.6 Genocide Memorials: Remembering the Unforgettable.

The pictures and video-clips of the massacres shown at the Kigali Memorial Centre are very graphic and shocking, and the brutalities they depict are almost surreal. However, some of the memorials are even more explicit in their portrayal of the genocide; they have personal belongings and the bodily remains of the victims on display in their original context, i.e. in the locations where the victims were murdered. One of these memorials is the Murambi Genocide Memorial, located about 30 km west of Butare (figure 14). It is estimated that 40.000 people sought refuge in and around the technical school at Murambi,⁶² and were killed there between April 19 and April 21. Up until then they fought the Interahamwe from the hill of the school, but stood no chance faced with the grenades of the Government Forces, who were called upon to assist the Interahamwe.⁶³ The men, women, elderly, children and infants at Murambi were killed mainly by the use of traditional weapons and tools. They were buried in mass graves on this hill until 1995, when it was decided to exhume several of the bodies. Approximately 800

⁶² The death toll at Murambi has ranged from 20.000 to 70.000, while the number of bodies exhumed at the site are “only” 5000 (Des Forges 2008:391). I use the number 50.000 because this was the estimate given by the guides at Murambi.

⁶³ Information handed out at Murambi Genocide Memorial.

of the partially preserved corpses of the victims are now laid out on benches in 24 of the school's rooms.⁶⁴ The visitor may walk into these rooms, have a close look at the bodies – some with tattered clothing still on – and take photographs. The bodies are preserved by the use of lime, which gives them a white color and a smell that combined with the traces of human decomposition is quite overwhelming. The victims' faces are twisted in agony and many of them have their arms stretched up towards their heads and faces – frozen in their last attempt to defend themselves (figure 15 & 16). Needless to say, the memorial at Murambi gives an impression that is difficult to describe in words.

One of the guides at the Murambi Genocide Memorial was among the 40.000 who sought refuge on that hill. She escaped with her one-month-old baby, but lost her husband and two children aged 5 and 7. Her response to the memorial is that it is just another thing you have to deal with – the government has decided that it should be a memorial center and that peoples' bodies should be on display, so that is the way it is. You simply have to accept it and live with it because there is no alternative.⁶⁵ She works at the memorial because she is a widow and has to support herself, but also to be able to be close to the ones she lost. She is probably not the only one with this kind of ambivalent relationship to Murambi; I was told about an old man who is always close to the memorial. He lost his whole family at Murambi and now he feels like he cannot leave that place either – he cannot be in his house because it becomes too obvious to him what he has lost. It pains him to be at Murambi with all the memories and traumas it evokes, but he cannot seem to stop himself from going there.⁶⁶ In some way he is forever frozen in time and place, unable to move on. Another survivor's testimony reflects some of the same motivations for staying close to Murambi:

I endure it because there's no other alternative, but it's really hard and scary for us to describe the things we witnessed. I also felt the need to take care of my family until they are buried, so I protect them. And there are people who need to know what happened here at Murambi and I explain to them (Emmanuel Mugenzira cited at www.museum.gov.rw/2_museums/murambi/genocide_memorial/pages_html/page_murambi_exhibit.htm).

These are just examples of what the memorial at Murambi, and perhaps other memorials, mean to the people who live close to them and for whom the memorial represent

⁶⁴ The memorial also consists of an exhibition resembling the one at Kigali Memorial Centre, but this was not open during my visit in September and November 2009.

⁶⁵ Personal comment by guide at Murambi Genocide Memorial, November 11 2009. Place: Murambi Genocide Memorial.

⁶⁶ Conversation with NUR student 1, November 14 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

unconceivable pain and trauma. Is this kind of commemoration necessary in order for Rwandans to remember? Is this showing respect for those who died here – having their half-decayed bodies on display? This is not to say that people should forget, but how could they? It is highly likely that they are very well aware of the fact that they live on a hill where 40.000 people were killed. This and all the other memorials are powerful reminders of the consequences of divisions and counteract revisionism, but should they not also facilitate the means for people to work through their pain in order to create a better future?

The Rwandan museums and memorials can be seen to represent a form of communication alongside the written or spoken word, because these are places where previously suppressed memories are being articulated. Hence, these arenas of “memory awakening” have the potential to be sites of healing through trauma; the remembrance and re-experience of traumas forces the unconscious or suppressed to the surface where it may be healed. This is a widespread belief within disciplines dealing with memory, which draws upon theories from psychoanalytical research on trauma and mourning. The “memory awakening” is exemplified by the previously mentioned reaction of survivors first visiting Kigali Memorial Centre, as well as the Murambi-survivors’ inability to leave Murambi physically or mentally. Bringing traumas to the surface is only one part of the healing process; an equally important part of it is the professional treatment of the traumas, which is severely lacking in Rwanda. Genocide remembrance through very explicit memorials is a problematic way of dealing with traumas, because very few have received trauma therapy. What you are left with is, to be simplistic, re-surfaced traumas without the following processes that enable a person to *make sense* of the memories, which may create a problematic foundation for a reconciled post-genocide society.

However, a positive aspect of the genocide memorials may be their cathartic function; the traumas are being dealt with in a collective manner, it is all let out in the open for people to reflect on and talk about. In this way, the memorials can be sites where people are allowed to lose themselves and grieve in a manner most cannot allow themselves to do in their everyday lives. One survivor, Jean Baptiste Kayigamba, states that it is essential that survivors are allowed to express themselves, both because this act of testifying will prevent revisionism and because trying to make others understand what happened “(...) helps restore some of the humanity that we lost during the genocide” (Kayigamba 2008:34). If I understand Kayigamba correctly, he is referring to the survivors’ spoken or written word. However, this could also be applied to memorials, because they often function as collective testimonies and sites of

knowledge production and transmission. As a consequence of this, the memorials may represent vital sites of re-humanization for many victims who do not wish or have the opportunity to share their experiences by talking or writing about it.

This is not to say that public grief and commemoration is open to all Rwandans; as already mentioned, the memories of Bahutu who lost someone are largely excluded from the public arena. There are also certain guidelines for reflections, grief and remembrance of the genocide, which apply to all Rwandans: you are free to voice your opinion and feelings as long as they correspond with the government policy of peace and reconciliation (Lemarchand 2008a). If you fail to follow this policy you may be faced with charges of supporting “divisionist” ideology by your community, the government, or both. In reality you have the choice of keeping silent or participate in the official discourse. By this I am not saying that many Rwandans today secretly support the ideology that led to the genocide – Rwandans *want* peace and reconciliation, but there ought also be room for the voices that reflect a somewhat different experience of what it means to be a Rwandan in the aftermath of a genocide, and especially reflections on the categories of Bahutu and Batutsi.

From a visitors point of view it is interesting to note the current tendency to construct prosthetic memory in museums and memorials that address traumatic events, such as genocide – especially as I was told that places such as Murambi were kept mainly for foreigners.⁶⁷ The term prosthetic memory refers to a form of public memory discussed by Alison Landsberg (2004), where memories of traumatic events are to an increasing degree turned into an experience shared both by the people who were directly involved and those who were nowhere close to actually experiencing it. The visitor to a museum “(...) takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through he or she did not live” (Landsberg 2004:2). To put it simply, through the discourse at museums and memorials in Rwanda I am, as a foreign visitor, encouraged to feel part of what happened in 1994 – I am made part of the traumas, the fear and the suffering and through this I am expected to gain an understanding of what it meant to actually be a part of the genocide. Hence, the visitor is encouraged to emotionally identify with the victims in order to gain insight into the events.

⁶⁷ Conversation with NUR student 1, November 14 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

We have to consider the conscious choice that has been made in exhuming the bodies at Murambi and displaying them in the manner previously mentioned. This can be seen as part of the construction of a prosthetic memory – both directed towards foreign visitors and the post-genocide generation. The latter group comprises all those Rwandans born after 1994, i.e. children up to 15-16 years old. They did not experience the genocide first-hand, but they are no doubt affected by it in their everyday lives. While the government emphasizes the role of this generation in creating unity in Rwanda as they have not “lived the divisions” themselves, I question whether genocide memorials such as Murambi have this effect. Rather, these are sites where the post-genocide generations may be taught more recent stereotypes: Bahutu-perpetrators and Batutsi-victims. In addition, the memorials may transmit the never lived traumas from one generation to another, creating and maintaining a feeling of distrust between Bahutu and Batutsi.

Upon visiting Murambi, as well as the Kigali Memorial Centre, I could not stop myself from imagining that the bodies belonged to my family members: how would I feel if I lost my family and friends in this brutal manner? Where would I have tried to hide from my attackers? The thoughts filled me with grief and empathy, and a feeling of being closer to knowing what the events of 1994 must have felt like. After a while, I realized my “mistake”: I could not possibly know what it felt like, because I did not run from attackers, I did not hide, and it was not my family lying on the benches at Murambi. This assumption of understanding easily made by the visitor is an extremely problematic aspect of prosthetic memory; the fact is that no matter how shocked you may be by seeing the bodies at Murambi and the pain you feel towards those who lost their loved ones, you will *never* fully understand how it feels for those involved. You can *never* share their experience. There is a gap between the on-looker’s ability to comprehend and the affected person’s lived experiences that cannot be bridged, not even by trying to recreate or simulate trauma in the communication of memories. Keeping these problems in mind, I also want to emphasize what Landsberg (2004:20-21) presents as the positive effects of prosthetic memory, most importantly “(...) the ability of prosthetic memories to produce empathy and social responsibility as well as political alliances that transcend race, class, and gender”. I do not want to underestimate the value of creating feelings of shared responsibilities in relation to atrocities of the world, but in the case of Rwanda I feel that the internal, political consequences of genocide memorials are of greater importance.

What are the effects of the memorials on the people living in close proximity to them? How do they position themselves in relation to the process of achieving peace and reconciliation between victims and perpetrators? One of the challenges in Rwandan society is the return of perpetrators from prison to their communities: “(...) the return of prisoners from jail to the community has greatly increased the level of angst in the entire community, not just among survivors” (Steward 2008:183). Why do perpetrators feel afraid when they are released from prison and reunited with their community? In their absence they have learned that what they did was terrible and they have knowledge about how the RDF government wants the post-genocide society to function. They have been to camps where they were taught the appropriate way of relating to their crimes and what their role in the community ought to be upon their return – humility and asking for forgiveness are keywords. The majority of the perpetrators are intent on making an effort to be accepted back in to the community – they are well aware that it is difficult, not to say impossible, for the survivors to forgive them. This is a process that involves public testimonies in *gacaca* and confrontations with the past. The perpetrators’ fear probably concerns their new role in society, the possibility of confrontations with survivors and of never being able to fully live the lives they once used to (Hatzfeld 2009).

The fear related to the return of perpetrators are probably not only survivors’ and perpetrators’ fear, it may also be the fear of “those in the middle” – the Bahutu who did not commit genocidal crimes, but who nevertheless are known in the community to be Bahutu. Upon the return of perpetrators it is possible that the innocent Bahutu will be thought of as belonging to the same category as criminal Bahutu – after all, they are all Bahutu and “Bahutu should keep their heads down and have shame in their hearts”.⁶⁸ For example, I was told by Professor Rutayisire at the Centre for Conflict Management that memorials such as Murambi was a necessity because it depicted a reality that could not be denied by revisionists, but also because *many of those living on the hill did not deserve to forget*.⁶⁹ A feeling that it is unjust to let *génocidaires* forget, while survivors are unable to, may be unavoidable. Is it possible that not acknowledging the difficulties of forgiveness and remembrance, as challenges experienced by a large section of the population, might pose a serious obstacle to reconciliation? The genocide memorials do little to balance the notion of Batutsi as victims and Bahutu as perpetrators – it might even be argued that this distinction is maintained by the

⁶⁸ Conversation with NUR student 2, September 19 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

⁶⁹ Interview with Professor Paul Rutayisire, September 15 2009. Place: Centre for Conflict Management.

memorials; “How can one speak of reconciliation when the exposure of skeletons has as its only purpose to remind the Tutsi that their own people were killed by Hutu? This is tantamount to keeping the latter in a permanent position of culpability” (Claudine Vidal cited in Lemarchand 2008:72). People at Murambi were skeptical towards the construction of the memorial, as it could incite hatred towards Bahutu. Because of this, an effort was made to find Bahutu who had rescued Batutsi and to tell their stories at the memorial as well. However, it is stated that this proved an almost impossible task as those who had rescued some Batutsi were guilty of killing others (www.museum.gov.rw/2_museums/murambi/genocide_memorial/pages_html/page_murambi_exhibit.htm). As discussed in relation to the Kigali Memorial Centre, the form that the commemoration of the genocide has taken is closely linked to the current government’s legitimization and maintenance of their political power, which seems to be dependent of presenting the political situation as a choice between RDF and a new genocide – to most Rwandans not a choice at all.

It is possible for the museums and memorials in Rwanda to be part of opening up a field for discussion of past and present identities. This could be achieved by presenting the prehistory and history of Rwanda *as balanced as possible* by using the archaeological and historical material available, and for example showing the interaction between the different groups that have inhabited the country, whether they are ethnic or not. In addition, the presentations of ethnic violence in Rwanda should be opened up to include currently excluded versions and experiences of past events – perhaps there is a possibility that Rwandans may broaden their understanding of their past when confronted with other perceptions of it, and that common acknowledgement of responsibilities and suffering is achieved. Removing ethnicity from the official narrative as has been done at the museums (but not at the memorials) does not erase it from people’s minds – it only underlines the “shamefulness” and potential danger of such thoughts and contributes to the more recent stereotype of Batutsi as victims and Bahutu as perpetrators; “Ironically, while aimed at eliminating the “divisions of the past”, the decree on ethnicity makes them all the more pregnant with mutual enmities” (Lemarchand 2008a:75). To include a wider range of narratives in the official discourse may prove to contribute to the reconciliation process and enable Rwandans to be more critical towards authorities. The latter point is important with regards to genocide prevention, as a culture of obedience towards the government was a prerequisite for the popular execution of the genocide in the first place. If Kagame’s government has as its priority to create a climate of future peace and reconciliation,

rather than securing RPF's continued monopoly on political power, the exclusion of certain memories, versions of the past and ethnic identities in official discourse should be reconsidered.

Chapter 7: Conclusions.

It might be safe to assume that the discreet role archaeology currently has in the context of Rwandan nation-building is attributable to a lack of non-colonialist historical records, as well as limited archaeological research. I have been told that the latter is a consequence of the government's priorities of "hard sciences" over "soft sciences", such as history.⁷⁰ The reason for this is practical; Rwanda is a poor country and is in need of promoting "cash-producing" educations, which is to be found mainly in "hard sciences". However, the research that has been conducted in post-genocide Rwanda, and the reinterpretation of previous research, indicates that we are indeed talking about a "nationalist archaeology" in the way that it is marked by a current need to recreate the past as a uniting force in the present. Throughout my analysis of museums and memorials, I have discussed the choices made in the exhibitions and the contribution they make to the construction of particular identities. I have argued that the official discourse of unity and a national identity for all Rwandans is expressed by the non-existence and outright ban of ethnicity in public spheres. The government's argument is that the ethnic categories of Bahutu and Batutsi are based on false assumptions that have created the divisions facilitating the genocide. Because ethnicity is seen as a colonial construct it has no place in the Rwandan society, and especially not in institutions that produce and transmit knowledge. However, it is my impression that ethnic identities are very much alive in Rwanda, structuring social relationships and – according to some – legitimating political power.⁷¹ The ethnic identities have to a large degree been replaced by identities of "victim" and "perpetrator", creating a different form of division among Rwandans. According to Mamdani (2001:267), the post-genocide identities lead to a distinction between all Batutsi as victims and all Bahutu as perpetrators – who "have shame in their hearts."⁷²

My analysis, especially concerning genocide memorials, propose that the constructed collective memory is generalizing, excluding and a potential source of resentment among

⁷⁰ I emphasize history among soft sciences because archaeology is not a university course in Rwanda. It is thus not possible to take a degree and become an archaeologist. Interview with Professor Paul Rutayisire, September 15 2009. Place: Centre for Conflict Management.

⁷¹ Interview with Jackline Nyiracyiza, September 29 and October 1 2009. Place: Uganda National Museum.

⁷² Conversation with NUR student 2, September 19 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

some Rwandans, while it at the same time may enable other Rwandans to address their traumatic experiences and feel that these are officially recognized. The genocide created victims and perpetrators, but it also had something in between. It is this “in between”, the grey areas, which could be beneficial to include in the official narrative so as to present the complexities of the events and minimize the suspicion towards all Bahutu. It is possible that this would lead to a decreasing level of anxiety and suspicion among Rwandans, both Bahutu and Batutsi. Highlighting the “in between” could create a platform for reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, and the population at large, because it breaks down the stereotypes and shows that solidarity, compassion and humanity did exist across ethnic boundaries during the genocide. Ethnicity in itself did not create the conflict – colonial administrations and governments did.

If the aim is reconciliation, unity and equality among all Rwandans, why are the abovementioned aspects not a part of official discourse? One possibility that I have discussed in this thesis is that doing so would require acknowledgement of the fact that some of the victims were Bahutu – of course this does not imply that Batutsi were not the targets of the genocide. I would argue that the legitimacy of the human rights abuses and crimes committed by RPF against Bahutu refugees during and after the genocide, rely on the existing clear-cut distinction of Batutsi as victims and Bahutu as perpetrators. By maintaining this distinction it is easier for the Rwandan government to explain their attacks on refugee camps in the DRC and civilians in Rwanda, as legitimate responses to ex-FAR and Interahamwe insurgency. Attacks by *génocidaires* are no doubt a real problem, but human rights organizations and international scholars have argued that some of the RPF attacks have targeted refugees and civilians in a way that strongly indicates revenge. Modifying the official version of past events could taint the image of RPF as liberators, and bring attention to the fact that the ethnic minority is now ruling the country (which they may feel as a necessity in order to control the majority and ensure the minority’s safety, according to Mamdani (2001:271)). Could the memorials function as a reminder of RPF’s role in the genocide, by maintaining a level of fear among Rwandans that make them see RDF as the one thing that separates them from a new genocide? As such, genocide memorials may legitimize and secure the political position of RDF.

In addition, the transmitted knowledge of the past is currently aimed at disproving the earlier theories concerning the origin and nature of Bahutu and Batutsi, as well as removing the

negative connotations of the Batutsi-ruled kingdom. A separate origin of Bahutu and Batutsi is no longer seen as a plausible explanation for the differences in the Rwandan population. Rather than being pastoralists migrating/conquering the Bahutu in the Iron Age and introducing them to the kingship institution, Batutsi, as well as Bahutu, are now interpreted as socio-economic categories. Iron Age migrations are not seen as a relevant or important part of the Rwandan past; migrations may or may not have taken place, either way it is claimed that they did not affect the Rwandan population noteworthy. As I have shown, migrations, racial distinction and century old oppression of Bahutu within the exploitative Batutsi-monarchy, was used in anti-Batutsi propaganda from the 1950s up until and during the genocide. The current theory, as presented at INMR, states that Rwanda was largely uninhabited until the arrival of Bantu-speaking peoples in the Iron Age. The development of an economic specialization, i.e. a distinction between agriculturalists and pastoralists, is interpreted as caused by internal factors, as is the formation of the kingdom. In short, the message is that all Rwandans are Bantu, they have the same origin and all Rwandans have contributed to the construction of the nation-state that exists today. The past is something all Rwandans can take pride in and especially the formation of a complex and highly centralized kingdom – past accomplishments are Rwandan.

What are the political consequences of this revised version of the past? The previously cited statement from the exhibition at Kigali Memorial Centre sums it up: “This has been our home for centuries. We are one people. We speak one language. We have one history” (Jenoside: Kigali Memorial Centre 2004:8). In this, the distinction between Bahutu and Batutsi have been of socio-economic character in pre-colonial times – they were terms referring to “high” and “low” economic and social positions. The positions were open to all Rwandans and everyone had equal opportunities to accumulate wealth. A past situation of equality and unity is thus presented, which makes it somewhat logical in the context of Rwandan nation-building to look back in time for guidance and inspiration. The focus on the royal history of Rwanda exemplifies this need for a “useful” past: the pre-colonial social relationships are seen as strong, the society at large is presented as prosperous, and the last king – who reigned during the colonial years – is celebrated as a national hero. All of these elements, and more, are part of a national narrative that presents the royal past as a golden era with values and traditions that need to be evoked in the present, in order to create (or, rather, recreate) a stable society. However, I find it peculiar that this particular part of the Rwandan past is highlighted to such an extent, considering the negative connotations it had after 1959. As I have proposed in this

thesis, the emphasis on royal history could be interpreted as a Batutsi-led government's attempt of legitimizing and naturalizing their hegemonic power by association to the Batutsi-dominated monarchy. This does not need to be done explicitly or require much work; most Rwandans know that the government is dominated by Batutsi and that the king and his court were always Batutsi. The association may be more or less conscious, as well as the government's intentions of emphasizing royal history. As I have explained in my discussion, this is one interpretation of the situation, but considering the fact that Kagame and his government take great measures in keeping their grip on power I do not find it impossible that this is one motivating force behind the selection of a royal, national narrative.

Is the current government in fact reproducing older structures of power, building its legitimacy on division and ensuring their grip on power by maintaining these divisions? This is my main concern when interpreting the material from museums and memorials and the uses of the past in official discourse. However, the Rwandan citizens must not be forgotten in this; they have shown an immense will to live in peace the last 16 years. Regardless of what has been written about the Rwandan culture of uncritical obedience towards authorities, I do believe that Rwandans are able to make up a mind of their own. The problem is the restricted room for individual opinions provided by the current government. I have previously emphasized the role and responsibilities museums and other sites of collective memory have in addressing issues relevant for the public, and in presenting the lived reality of Rwandans. Ethnicity is a part of this reality and its problems and possibilities should be transmitted.

Archaeology and other disciplines concerned with interpretations of the past have been affected by the official, nationalist discourse by being revised and modified. This is not unusual and I would argue that it is largely unproblematic was it not for the suspicion that the way the past is presented today is creating continued divisions among Rwandans. According to Kohl & Fawcett (1995:6), an archaeological (and historical) practice too closely connected to the government's policies is problematic, because it "all too readily becomes a distorted archaeology that bends and ignores rules of evidence to promote the glories of the ethnic group in command". The inclusion of presently "unfit" or "irrelevant" knowledge and memories in the context of museums and memorials could create a broader understanding of Rwandan history and it could enable critical reflection. This is extremely important if the current government is committing the same sin as their predecessors: using the past to legitimize a discriminatory practice of power sharing. It has been said that an important factor

in the conflicts has been misconceptions and misinterpretations of archaeological, historical and anthropological material. Addressing these head on, as difficult and distressing as it may be, could create the possibility of healing Rwandan wounds by coming to terms with a complex and contested past.

Sammendrag.

Den politiske historien i Rwanda er preget av voldelige konflikter, som har hatt sitt grunnlag i rasemessige og etniske skillelinjer mellom Bahutu og Batutsi. Den mest omfattende av disse konfliktene var folkemordet i 1994, hvor nær en million mennesker mistet livet, hovedsaklig den etniske minoriteten Batutsi. Dagens regjering forsøker å fremheve en nasjonal identitet ved å forby henvisninger til etniske identiteter i det offentlige rom. Tanken er at Bahutu og Batutsi, som etniske identiteter, har virket splittende på befolkningen, mens en nasjonal identitet vil virke forenende på alle rwandere. Dette politiske prosjektet gjenspeiles i den offisielle formidlingen av fortiden, blant annet ved at et felles opphav for alle rwandere har erstattet tidligere oppfatninger om Bahutu og Batutsis separate opprinnelse. Den offisielle forkastelsen av Bahutu og Batutsi som etniske identiteter står i kontrast til formidlingen av disse i kontekst av minnesmerker for folkemordet; her er Bahutu synonymt med gjerningsmann og Batutsi med offer. Dette skaper en situasjon hvor det risikeres at unyanserte, etniske skillelinjer fortsetter å strukturere samfunnet. En offisiell diskusjon av etniske identiteter på steder hvor kunnskap produseres og formidles, blant annet på nasjonalmuseet i Butare, kan bidra til en mer nyansert omformulering av Bahutu og Batutsis meningsinnhold. Å forsone seg med fortiden, og å finne stolthet og inspirasjon i den, er viktige ledd i ”peace and reconciliation”-prosessen i Rwanda. I dette kan arkeologi (og formidling av fortiden mer generelt) ha en grunnleggende funksjon ved at kunnskap produsert i diskriminerende politiske kontekster utfordres og nyanseres. En forbedret kunnskap om fortiden kan også bidra til å forhindre at arkeologiske og historiske ”fakta” misbrukes av politiske aktører nok en gang.

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Figure 2: Interior of Hima house: equipment for milk consumption. Uganda National Museum.



Figure 3: Interior of Hima house, Uganda National Museum.



Figure 4: Kasubi Royal Tombs (front).



Fig. 5: Royal memorabilia, Kasubi Royal Tombs.



Fig. 6: Royal memorabilia, Kasubi Royal Tombs.



Figure 7: Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (front).



Figure 8: Reconstructed traditional hut on INMR's premises.



Figure 9: Stone Age and Iron Age material on display at INMR.



Figure 10: The Royal Palace, Nyanza (front).



Figure 11: Reconstructed traditional royal hut, Nyanza.



Figure 12: Kigali Memorial Centre (front).

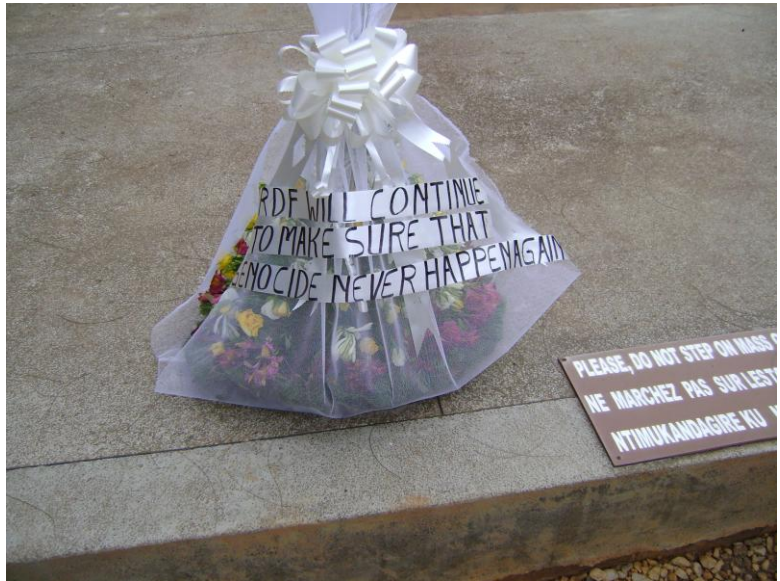


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Figure 16: Exhibition at Murambi Genocide Memorial.

All photos by Solveig Guddal.

List of interviews and personal comments.

Interviews.

Misago, Celestin Kanimba: Professor of archaeology and Director at the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda. Date: October 29 2009. Place: Professor Misago's office at INMR.
Duration: 30 min.

Ntagwabira, André: Scientific Expert at the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda. Date: October 30 2009. Place: Ntagwabira's office at INMR. Duration: one hour.

Nyiracyiza, Jackline: Conservator (history and archaeology) at Uganda National Museum. Date: September 29 and October 1 2009. Place: Nyiracyiza's office at Uganda National Museum. Duration: 2-3 hours.

Rutayisire, Paul: Professor of history at Centre for Conflict Management, National University of Rwanda. Date: September 15 2009. Place: Rutayisire's office at CCM. Duration: one hour.

Personal comments.

Employee at Kigali Memorial Center. Date: September 21 2009. Place: outside of Kigali Memorial Centre.

Guide at Murambi Genocide Memorial. Date: November 11 2009. Place: outside of Murambi Genocide Memorial.

Karangwa, Jerome: researcher at INMR. Date: November 2 2009. Place: INMR.

Knipp-Rentrop, Karen: technical expert at INMR. Date: October 30 2009. Place: Knipp-Rentrop's office at INMR.

NUR student 1. Date: November 14 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

NUR student 2. Date: September 19 2009. Place: Hotel Ibis.

Representative from Mainz Museum. Date: October 5 2009. Place: INMR.

