

CHAPTER SEVEN

RWANDA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CONFLICT NARRATIVE AND HISTORY EDUCATION BEFORE 1994

Introduction

When South Africans went to the polls on the 27th April 1994 celebrating the beginning of freedom and democracy, Rwanda was three weeks into a genocide that would shock the world. While the Hutu Power *interahamwe* militia were massacring Tutsi, and any Hutu who opposed the genocide, the media was focused on South Africa's 'miracle' transition from apartheid to democracy. By the time the genocide had run its course, some 800 000 people had been killed.

This chapter begins to place the South African story in comparative relief. By examining how the conflict narrative was constructed during the colonial period, and how it was appropriated in post-colonial Rwanda, it provides the historical context for the examination of the construction of memory and identity in Rwanda after 1994. In examining the construction of the narrative, a number of current beliefs in Rwanda about the origins of the 'ethnic' categories of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa will be addressed. This chapter further examines the claims about the contribution of the conflict narrative to the genocide, placing these in the social context of Rwanda at the time. This is particularly critical in view of the repeated Rwandan government claims of a direct link between colonially constructed ethnicity, history education and the genocide.¹ According to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Rwandan history taught in schools after independence, caused hatred between Tutsi and Hutu providing a context within which genocide was thinkable and possible.²

¹ The Republic of Rwanda (2002) 2020 Vision Daft 3: 13 for example states, 'During the colonial era, Belgian colonialists applied the contemporary European racist theories to the Rwandan society, deeply dividing Rwandan people on ethnic basis. This inheritance led to the first episode of ethnic cleansing and of genocide orchestrated in 1959 and to periodic pogroms until the early 90s'; in an interview, President Kagame stated: 'The ethnic divide that was created and heightened by the colonialists...'; <http://www.gov.rw/government/president/index.html> (Accessed 27 February 2006)

² For example, Rutayisire, J, Kabano, J. & Rubagiza, J. (2002) *Rwanda: Synopsis of the Case Study*. This was part of a research project of IBE-UNESCO (2002-2003), *Curriculum Change and Social Cohesion in Conflict-affected Societies*. The team leader of the Rwanda group was at the time the

History and history education are ideological and political, serving group interests on many levels. This may be official history that aims to legitimise a particular regime, or vernacular history forged in opposition to official histories. Bodnar, in his conceptualisation of official, public and vernacular histories does not engage with oral tradition, a form of history that is critical to understanding the African pre-colonial past. This chapter engages with oral tradition as official history and the appropriation of the oral tradition of the *nyiginya* royal lineage of the Tutsi as official history in post-colonial Rwanda. Most often, oral traditions contain the genealogies of royal lineages which served to legitimise the current king or chief. Oral traditions also incorporate cultural knowledge, including court rituals. However, ‘real’ history is embedded in oral tradition, and together with archaeology, has become an important source of pre-literate, pre-colonial history. Oral tradition could be said to be as political as written history, and in Rwanda it was a critical element in the construction of the conflict narrative. What emerged from this investigation is the intersection of powerful interests, which converged in colonial Rwanda, to construct a narrative of the pre-colonial past that served the interests of the Tutsi ruling lineage, the colonial power and the Catholic Church in Rwanda. This narrative had unintended consequences when it became the official conflict narrative in independent Rwanda, and Tutsi were cast as foreign invaders to be sent back from where they came. As such, Tutsi were denied Rwandan identity and the possession or ownership of the master narrative, which conferred legitimacy and acceptance as citizens, with associated legal, political, social, cultural and economic rights.

Pseudo-scientific notions of race and the Rwandan past: creation of a master narrative

Colonial perceptions about the origins of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, derived from the 19th early 20th century Social Darwinism and pseudo-scientific notions of the hierarchy of races lay at the heart of the conflict narrative. The Nile explorer, John Hanning Speke, the first European to visit the area in 1858, developed a theory of

Director of the Curriculum Development Centre in Kigali. Because of this perception, a moratorium was placed on the teaching of Rwandan history in 1994.

‘conquest of inferior by superior races’ in Africa.³ Based on pseudo-scientific race theories, the belief that gained currency during the colonial occupation of Rwanda and Burundi was that the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa were three distinct people, representative of three major population groups: Hamitic pastoralists from Ethiopia; Bantu agriculturalists; and Pygmoid.⁴ The Tutsi, being ‘Hamitic’ were considered to be closer to Europeans in the racial hierarchy and therefore of superior intelligence to the Hutu and Twa. Missionaries and respected anthropologists of the time gave credence and wide publicity to these theories giving them academic legitimacy. The Tutsi, said to have ‘migrated’ into the region after the Twa (the first people) and the Hutu, were variously described in colonial reports as ‘superb men’, as having ‘Caucasian skulls and beautiful Greek profiles’, as being ‘closer to the white man than the Negro’.⁵ These were essentially racial constructs and in defining the Tutsi in this way, it created the possibility of defining Hutu as the ‘other’ who were in all ways inferior. As such, here we have the construction of a minor narrative around a set of definable concrete events and ethnic statements, grounded in a poisonous cocktail of eugenics and fundamental Christianity. The minor narrative was in no sense a subjugated knowledge or counter-memory: it was a deliberate, fictitious construct.

Rwanda was colonised during the late 19th Century ‘scramble for Africa’. Originally a German colony, the Germans instituted a policy of indirect rule in Rwanda from 1897-1916. This was continued by the Belgians when they took over the colonies of Rwanda and Burundi from Germany after the First World War. The period of German colonisation had done little to change the structure of Rwandan society. In

³ This was explained in his book, *The Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, Kessinger Publishing 2004, in the chapter on The History of the Wahuma: 174. See also footnote 5 below.

⁴ See for example: Pottier, J. (2002) *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the late Twentieth Century* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Eltringham, N. (2004) *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* London: Pluto Press; Mamdani, M. (2001) *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* Princeton: Princeton University & Cape Town: David Philip Publishers; Prunier, G. (1997) *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* London: Hurst & Company

⁵ Various reports quoted in Eltringham (2004): 16 & 17; Prunier (1997) quotes a number of these descriptions: 6-8. He further notes that the Nile explorer, John Hanning Speke was the first to develop a theory of ‘conquest of inferior by superior races’ in Africa and without any evidence, decided that the Tutsi descendents of the Galla of southern Ethiopia. Later explorers and missionaries shared this opinion. Most respected anthropologists of the time gave these theories credence and wide publicity: 7-8

establishing a system of indirect rule, considerable leeway was left to the Rwandese monarchy, which at the time was in the process of centralising power, to continue its move towards more centralised rule. This included the annexation of Hutu chiefdoms and increasing the power of the Tutsi king.⁶ Therefore Rwanda was colonised by Germany at a critical time in the consolidation of royal power. First the Germans, then the Belgians, used the centralising Rwandan ‘state’ as a tool of colonisation through a system of indirect rule.⁷

During the Belgian colonial period, the pseudo-scientific racial constructs and what became defined as ethnic differences between Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, were merged. The current Rwandan government regards the Belgian colonial period as the critical time when ethnic identities were constructed and entrenched in Rwanda. While historians agree that colonialism entrenched ethnic identities in Rwanda, there is debate about the extent to which these identities were in fact a colonial creation or were in the process of forming before the imposition of colonial rule.⁸ Pottier argues that up to about 1860, historians know very little about how the terms ‘Hutu’, ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Twa’ were used in social discourse⁹, but from about that time the king or mwami, King Kigeli IV Rwabugiri of the then ruling *nyiginya* dynasty, had begun extending his influence. He broke the political power of formerly autonomous local lineages and institutionalised ‘ethnic’ division between ‘Tutsi’ pastoralists and ‘Hutu’ farmers through the institution of a forced labour service to the king, called *uburetwa*, that was restricted to Hutu.¹⁰ Essentially, there is broad agreement that European rule

⁶ Prunier (1997): 24

⁷ Prunier (1997): 25

⁸ Longman, T. and Rutagengwa, T. (2004) Memory, identity, and community in Rwanda, in Stover, E. and Weinstein, H.M. (eds) *My neighbor, My Enemy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 162-182; Newbury, C. & Newbury, D. (2000) Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist historiography in Rwanda. *The American Historical Review* Vol. 105, Issue 3, presented online in association with the *History Cooperative* <http://www.historycooperative.org>. Accessed 8 November 2005; Des Forges, A. (1999) *Leave none to tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Rights Watch; Paris: International Federation of Human Rights, <http://hrw.org/reports/1999/Geno1-15> Accessed 20 August 2005

⁹ Pottier (2002): 12-13

¹⁰ Ibid: 110

did not invent the terms Hutu and Tutsi, but the colonial intervention changed what the categories meant and how they mattered.¹¹

It was in the interests of Rwabugiri to collaborate with the colonial authorities to extend his personal power. To colonial authorities, finding what appeared to be a strong and centralised Rwandan state ruled by a Tutsi royal lineage seemed to be proof of the superiority of the Tutsi and of their ‘foreign’ origins. So, while the colonial presence was clearly a strong factor in the consolidation of ethnic identities in Rwanda, to claim that colonisation imposed ethnic identities on an unwilling population, suggests a lack of agency on the part of those colonised. Research has provided evidence of a range of responses across Africa to colonialism. It has also been argued that ethnicity as a form of collective cultural identity and political culture is a particular phenomenon in the Great Lakes region.¹² Jewsiewicki researching ethnicity in the Belgian Congo writes of the:

dual nature of ethnicity as both structure and process. As a cultural identity and consciousness laden with possibilities for political mobilization and as a discourse which arranges collective memory as a basis for political action, ethnicity is a specific form of historically grounded relationships between individuals.¹³

Ethnicity in this explanation is rooted in collective identity, with communities selectively reinforcing identifying traits, often in times of conflict for reasons of security, or because there may be some form of material gain in constructing a particular ethnicity and identity.¹⁴ In Rwanda, ethnicity was located in the identities of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa that were already becoming more defined under the expanding

¹¹ Scott Strauss has summed up the current debate about ethnicity in Rwanda in his book, *The Order of Genocide*: 18-21. While it is important to note the debate, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with it in great depth.

¹² Jewsiewicki, B. (1989) *The Formation of the Political Culture of Ethnicity in the Belgian Congo, 1920-1959*, in Vail, L. (ed) (1989) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey Ltd & University of California Press. Jewsiewicki discusses ethnicity in relation to the Belgian Congo. While he claims that ethnicity is ‘unique’ in Zairean society it is not true as it is also present in Burundi and, of course, Rwanda. Perhaps it is something that developed particularly in Belgian controlled territories.

¹³ Jewsiewicki, B. (1989): 325

¹⁴ Ibid

power of the mwami, Rwabugiri, after 1860, and in colonial Rwanda, the Tutsi derived influence and material gain from the position of privilege resulting from their particular 'ethnic' identity.

The Catholic Church in Rwanda has also been heavily implicated in entrenching the racial hierarchy in Rwanda, and indeed, in complicity in the genocide of 1994. The first mission station in Rwanda was established in 1900 by the White Fathers (the Society of Our Lady of Africa), who also had a presence in Burundi and parts of the Congo. The bond between the Catholic Church and state in colonial Rwanda was powerful. While colonial administrators came and went, the Catholic priests remained in Rwanda, and became almost the only whites to become proficient in Kinyarwanda.¹⁵ The Church, with 'on-site' experience, advised the colonial authorities and had control of education, aligning it to the demands of the colonial state's indirect rule and collaborating with the colonial authorities to institutionalise the inequality in society according to the ethnic identities. The missionaries played an important role in advising the colonial authorities on setting up the administration on the basis of ethnicity. In 1930, Mgr Classe, a Catholic bishop who had arrived in Rwanda years before as a priest, advised the authorities that the:

greatest mistake this government could make would be to suppress the Mututsi caste...We will have no better, more active and more intelligent chiefs than the Batutsi. They are the ones best suited to understand progress...The government must work mainly with them.¹⁶

Therefore, from the early years of Belgian colonisation of Rwanda, the church through its missionaries and control of education served state interests.¹⁷ Education was the tool for sustaining the colonial system. The colonial authorities and missionaries in Rwanda determined who would have access to schooling and

¹⁵ Prunier (1997): 32

¹⁶ Quoted in Prunier (1997):26

¹⁷ Longman, T. (1997) *Christian Churches and Genocide in Rwanda*, paper presented at a Conference on Genocide, Religion and Modernity, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 11-13

education on the basis of ethnicity, at the same time defining, on the basis of ethnicity, who would occupy important political posts.¹⁸

Belgians reorganised the Rwandan administration between 1926 and 1931. In the 1930s the introduction of identity cards by the Belgians fixed ethnic identities which had before then been relatively fluid in practice if not in theory. From 1927, as a result of the administrative reorganisation the Tutsi élite began to convert to Christianity in significant numbers as Christianity was a prerequisite for appointments to colonial positions. This opened the way for the church to extend its control over the future élite of the country through education.¹⁹ As the Tutsi were considered by colonial authorities to be the '*natural born chiefs*', they were the only Rwandans to be given key positions in the colonial administration, to the extent that existing Hutu chiefs were fired and replaced by Tutsi. In the process of administrative reforms, the Tutsi élite had shown how keenly aware they were of the advantages participation in the colonial administration offered them.

It would, perhaps, at this point be valuable to set the construction of ethnic identities in Rwanda within a broader context of the construction of ethnicity elsewhere in Africa during the colonial period. Similar processes were in fact, unfolding throughout colonial Africa in the late 19th century.²⁰ Leroy Vail, in his introduction to a volume of research papers on the construction of tribalism and ethnicity in Africa, identifies three variables for the creation and implanting of the ethnic message:

- a group of intellectuals (including local intellectuals) who are involved in formulating it – what he calls, 'culture brokers';
- a system of 'indirect rule' which made use of African intermediaries to administer the subordinate peoples;

¹⁸ Shyaka, A (2002) quoted in Obura: 98

¹⁹ Prunier (1997): 32

²⁰ Including, for example, Afrikaner identity discussed in Chapter 4.

- a real need by ordinary people for ‘so-called traditional values’ which were embodied in the ethnic and tribal constructs at a time of rapid social change, opening the way for the wide acceptance of the new ideologies.²¹

Vail makes the point, that in all of the case studies in the volume, there was local agency – indigenous African intellectuals were involved in the process of constructing ethnicity, often working hand in hand with their European counterparts. Missionaries also played a critical role in the process, providing the cultural symbols that could be organised into a cultural [ethnic] identity, especially a written language. It was generally the missionaries who provided descriptions of ‘customs’ and ‘traditions’, tending to ‘freeze’ them as ‘traditional’ at a particular moment in time. It was they who researched and wrote ‘tribal’ histories. Missionaries controlled colonial education and included the ‘tribal histories’ in the curricula of the mission schools, reinforcing ethnic identities in pupils and socialising the youth into accepting ethnic membership.²² Virtually all of the studies demonstrated the key role of the mission-educated indigenous elite in the construction of the ethnic ideologies.²³ In Rwanda these variables were represented by the interests of the colonial administrators, the Catholic missionaries and the Tutsi elite.

Vail argues that in many respects, and perhaps more importantly than any of the other aspects, ‘ethnic identity came to be specified by the ‘actual operation of the administrative mechanisms of indirect rule’.²⁴ In Rwanda, the Tutsi elite became the ‘intermediaries’ who collaborated with the colonial authorities to administer the territory. They were actively involved in the administration of the country, and it has

²¹ Vail, L. (ed) (1989) *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. London: James Currey Ltd & University of California Press. Introduction: 4-19

²² Vail (1989). This was also the case as far south as the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, South Africa, where missionaries were active in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. See Weldon, G (1984) *The interaction between the missionaries of the Cape eastern frontier and the colonial authorities in the era of Sir George Grey, 1854-1861*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Department of Historical Studies, University of Natal.

²³ Vail (1989) - Vail further notes that research has shown that in societies where missionaries did not work or where they did work but did not introduce western-style education, or where African intellectuals emerged only at a late period or not at all, the development of ethnic ideologies was either stalled or never occurred: 12

²⁴ Ibid: 13

been suggested that it was the Tutsi rather than the Belgians who largely determined the ways in which colonialism shaped the transformation of the pre-colonial relationship between Tutsi and Hutu.²⁵ Their ‘right’ to the administrative positions rested in the biological determinism of the Belgian administrators and missionaries who regarded the ‘Hamitic’ Tutsi as ‘born to rule’.

Constructing the conflict narrative

An examination of the construction of ethnicity in Rwanda is an important context for the construction of the conflict narrative to which this next section turns. While Vail argues that the actual operation of the administrative system of indirect rule carries most of the responsibility for entrenching ethnic identities, he also highlights the important role of intellectuals, foreign and local, as ‘culture brokers’ for the ethnic message. In Rwanda, the ethnic message became central to the conflict narrative, and two intellectuals, the Rwandan Alexis Kagame, and the Belgian Jacques Maquet, were the key ‘culture brokers’ in the construction of the narrative in the 1950s. In the narrative, the biological explanation of Rwandan ethnicity was reinforced by Tutsi oral tradition, a combination which unwittingly became explosive in post-colonial Rwanda.

Alexis Kagame was a Rwandan intellectual, priest and historian. Kagame’s family were members of the *nyiginya* élite, the Rwandan royal lineage, and had been the traditional court historians. He was thus intimately familiar with the oral traditions of the *nyiginya* royal dynasty. His Catholic colonial education, itself steeped in the notions of Tutsi as racially superior and born to rule, reinforced his traditional knowledge. His first book, published in 1943, was an oral history of ancient Rwanda – a Tutsi oral history. In 1952 he wrote *Le code des institutions politiques du Rwanda*, a defence of the Tutsi monarchy and ‘traditions’; and a doctoral thesis *the Bantu-Rwandese Philosophy of Being* in 1956. His work brought together the oral traditions

²⁵ Newbury, C. (1988) *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* New York: Columbia University Press. Quoted in Pottier (2002): 118. Also in a rare acknowledgement in documents produced in Rwanda, the authors of the IRDP document, *History and Conflicts in Rwanda*, state that the ‘chiefs had a significant share of the colonial power, using it for their own interests, and even exceeding the requirements of their colonial masters.’: 200

(official history) Tutsi *nyiginya* lineage and the colonial misconceptions of the African past, as well as the ideas of race in the works of anthropologists, such as Pagés, that gained influence in the 1930s. In a discussion of clans he emphasised notions of race:

One should not confuse Banyiginya with Hutu race and Banyiginya with Mututsi race. It is possible that the first group started working for the conquerors [Tutsi] from the beginning of the Hamite immigration and received in turn for the obedience and submission to bear the name of the winners [clan].²⁶

Tutsi identity was ideologised within court's rich oral tradition and reinforced by court rituals or cultural knowledge, during the time of King Rwabugiri in the latter half of the 19th century.²⁷ Oral traditions are viable sources of evidence and official histories in their own right, but as with all sources, they need to be subjected to critical analysis. Official histories in all societies are about power and influence and legitimising the ruling elite, which attempt to advance their concerns by promoting particular versions of the past. In reifying the oral traditions of the *nyiginya* in written tradition, without any critical analysis,²⁸ as the history of Rwanda and incorporating the colonial racial ideas into existing understanding of aristocratic 'Tutsi' rule,²⁹ as well as histories of migrations of people in Africa, Kagame helped to create an exclusionary conflict narrative that contributed to entrenching notions of superiority and inferiority among Rwandans.

As a respected priest and historian Kagame's work was central to the acceptance of a narrative of Rwanda that enshrined the dangerous myths of Tutsi as ancient Hamites

²⁶ Pagés (1933) quoted in National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) (2006) *The Teaching of History of Rwanda: a Participatory Approach*, Kigali: NCDC & Regents of the University of California: 26. <http://www.hrcberkeley.org/pdfs/Rwanda-Curriculum-English1.pdf> Accessed 1 September 2007 Clans contained members from Tutsi, Hutu and Twa and the Abanyiginya clan in 1970 had a majority of Tutsi but also contained Hutu and Twa. Ibid: 28

²⁷ Newbury (1988): 112

²⁸ At a different level, this is what happened when Afrikaner Nationalist historians appropriated the oral histories of the suffering of Boer women and children in the British concentration camps. They did so without interrogating their sources.

²⁹ Eltringham, N. (2004) *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda*. London: Pluto Press: 17

and later migrants to the area. An extract from his writing emphasises power and ‘superior’ technology:

[this clan] represents the category of ancient Hamites, who left the memory of incomparable power in Rwanda...Their civilisation was usually identified with hoes, hammers and other forged tools...These Hamites might have been strongly equipped with tools much more modern than those of Rwandans. They dug wells for their cows in stony places. It is from this sign that the famous wells of Rwanda of today were recognised and traditions attributed to their initial digging.³⁰

Kagame was regarded as an intellectual of some standing in the international community and his work had a profound influence in the creation of the ideology of Tutsi superiority which became a hegemonic reality.³¹

Kagame became a bridge between the European specialists on Rwanda and the Rwandan intellectuals. A colonial-indigenous intellectual partnership developed between Kagame and the colonial ethnographer and anthropologist, Jacques Maquet. Maquet was the first to ‘transcribe [the] aristocratic representation of pre-colonial Rwanda in refined ethnographic language’, who because of an alleged ‘academic distance’ was able to pass his work off as objective.³² He based his research on Kagame’s work and did not interview a single Hutu in gathering data – just as Kagame had not drawn upon oral traditions of other lineages. The *nyiginya* oral traditions, reified through written text, became fixed narratives of the past.

The Kagame-Maquet narratives legitimised the structures of indirect rule in Rwanda and the privileged position of the Tutsi elite. Generations of educated Rwandans who

³⁰ Kagame, A. (1972) quoted in National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) (2006) *The Teaching of History of Rwanda: a Participatory Approach*, Kigali: NCDC & Regents of the University of California <http://www.hrcberkeley.org/pdfs/Rwanda-Curriculum-English1.pdf> Accessed 1 September 2007

³¹ Prunier (1997): 39

³² Vidal, C. (1991) *Sociologie des Passions: Côte d’Ivoire, Rwanda* (Paris: Editions Karthala) quoted in Pottier (2002): 204

attended lectures, or conferences, or read Kagame's books were influenced by him.³³ In post-colonial Rwanda, the dangers of Kagame-Maquet narrative was highlighted by the use of the narrative by politicians to politicise the Hutu, identifying the Hutu as the oppressed 'natives' and therefore rightful rulers of Rwanda and the Tutsi as the oppressive foreign invaders who needed to be sent back from where they had come.³⁴

Mamdani has emphasised the complicity between colonial authorities and 'history writing in and about Rwanda' in entrenching the 'racial' myths, arguing that the colonialism racialised the 'parameters within which most historians of the time pursued knowledge':

If the colonial state underscored racial origins as a key attribute of citizenship and rights, historians became preoccupied with the *search for origins*. If official racism presumed that migration was central to the spread of civilization...historians seemed content to centre their scholarly pursuits on the question of migration. And finally, if the colonial state defined the subject population as Hutu and Tutsi (and Twa)...historians presumed an equally *unproblematized* link between ancestral Hutu and Tutsi and those contemporarily so identified.³⁵

What Mamdani missed was the role played by Alexis Kagame as a local 'culture broker' in the 'racialisation of Rwandans' by creating a particular version of the past

³³ Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (2006) *History and conflicts in Rwanda* Kigali: IRDP: 194

³⁴ The extent to which this kind of narrative was internalised was demonstrated when a version of the story was repeated by a Hutu farmer interviewed for the 2004 documentary, *The Ghosts of Rwanda*. He had taken part in killing the Tutsi who had gathered in the Catholic Church at Nyarubuye for safety. He narrated as fact that the Tutsis used to abuse Hutus. As he said: 'My understanding is that Tutsis are not originally from Rwanda. I heard that they might have come from Egypt or somewhere else.' Frontline/PBS Documentary, *Ghosts of Rwanda*, released 2004 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Transcript available at

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/script.html> Accessed 8 December 2007

³⁵ Mamdani (2001): 269 Original emphasis. While Mamdani's analysis is contested, I accept his interpretation of ethnicity in Rwanda insofar as the pseudo-scientific notions of 'race' were entrenched in the historical narratives. He argues that the Hamitic theory caste Tutsi as 'foreign' invaders i.e. a different 'race'. It is also worth noting that early South African historians were equally engaged in the origin and migrations of South Africans into the area as part of the legitimising myth of the 'empty land' occupied by Boers in the mid-19th century and the justification for the homeland policy of apartheid that sought to set up independent 'states' based on 'natural' regions of pre-colonial occupation.

that both served the interests of the Tutsi elite and validated European assumptions about the racial hierarchy in Rwanda.³⁶ Social relations and feelings in colonial and post-colonial Rwanda took place in relation to the conflict narrative. It was a narrative that not only cast Hutu in a subordinate position in the social hierarchy, but could also be regarded as a denial of Hutu memory in the form of their own oral traditions. Hutu oral tradition became vernacular memories, forged into chosen traumas³⁷ of Hutu oppression by Tutsi (foreign) oppressors.

Paul Rusesabagina (of Hotel Rwanda) in his book about the genocide, noted that the doctrine of Tutsi superiority was taught in schools, preached in churches, and reinforced in thousands of invisible ways in daily Rwandan life. The Tutsi were told over and over that they were aristocratic and physically attractive, while the Hutu were told that ‘they were ugly and stupid and worthy only of working in the fields...This was the message that our fathers and mothers heard every day’.³⁸ What is critical is that the racial or ethnic ‘message’ was reinforced from all sides, including the church. Humiliation is a powerfully negative force that results in deeply internalised attitudes that can erupt into conflict.³⁹ Once there is institutionalised racism around which the entire administration or government structure is constructed, racial consciousness affects everyone and racial identities become deeply internalised. In Rwanda, even the ‘small’ Tutsi, who did not benefit from the system, started to believe that they were a superior race; and of course the Hutu, deprived of political power and exploited by whites and Tutsi, were told by everyone that they were inferior.⁴⁰ Before independence it was far more, as Vail suggests, the actual operation

³⁶ Longman, T. (1997) *Christian Churches and Genocide in Rwanda*, paper presented at a Conference on Genocide, Religion and Modernity, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, May 11-13; Des Forges (1999)

³⁷ Volkan (2007). Also referred to in Staub, E, Pearlman, LA, Gubin, A & Hagengimana, A. (2005) Healing, Reconciliation, Forgiving and the Prevention of violence after Genocide or Mass Killing: an Intervention and its Experimental Evaluation in Rwanda, in *Journal of social and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 3; 297-334

³⁸ Rusesabagina, P. (with Tom Zoellner) (2006) *An Ordinary Many, The true story behind ‘Hotel Rwanda’* London: Bloomsbury: 30

³⁹ Lindner, E.G. (2000 and 2004) *The Psychology of Humiliation: Somalia, Rwanda/Burundi, and Hitler’s Germany*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oslo has made an in-depth analysis of humiliation and its legacy in her dissertation.

⁴⁰ Prunier (1997): 38. Similar attitudes developed among white South Africans. Bloke Modisane, in his book *Blame me on History* writes of an encounter in the 1950s with a white woman beggar, who in

of the administrative mechanisms of indirect rule that defined and entrenched ethnic identities.

In Rwanda, the system of education was developed in line with the colonial notions of race and Tutsi superiority. Education was unequal, characterised by injustice based on ethnicity, regionalism, gender disparity and religious discrimination.⁴¹ During the first years of colonial administration the Tutsi were favoured over the Hutu in school admissions. The table below shows the enrolment breakdown by ethnic origin for Astrida (Butare) College prior to independence.⁴²

Year	Tutsi Pupils	Hutu Pupils
1932	45	9
1945	46	3
1954	63	19
1959	279	143

However, in the post-World War II years, a number of missionaries who came to work in Rwanda were from the working-class and sensitive to the inequalities of class and race.⁴³ Concerned about the oppression of the Hutu, who were excluded from political office even though they constituted more than 80% of the population, these new ‘progressive’ missionaries admitted more Hutu into secondary schools, cultivating a Hutu counter-élite and helping to raise the consciousness among the Hutu masses of their exploitation. This trend can be seen in the 1959 figures in the table above in which the percentage gap between the Tutsi and Hutu admitted to school is closing. It is this group of missionaries who have been accused of

accepting money from him, called him ‘boy’. He wrote: ‘...it was interesting to note that even in her destitute moment she did not lose sight of the fact that I must be reminded that she was a member of the superior race group...’. B. Modisane (1963: 1986) *Blame me on History* (Craighall:AD Donker): 156

⁴¹ Rutayisire, J., Kabano, J., & Rubagiza, J. (2003) Rwanda Case Study in *Curriculum Change and Social Cohesion in conflict affected Societies* IBE:UNESCO. Rutayisire was Director of the Curriculum Development Centre in Kigali.

⁴² Prunier, G (1997): 33

⁴³ Kalibwami, J (1991) *Le Catholicisme et la Société Rwandaise, 1900-1952* Editions Présence Africaine: Paris/Dakar. Quoted in Pottier (2002): 124

intensifying the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi by teaching a history that identified the Tutsi rather than the colonial power as the oppressors of the Hutu.⁴⁴

Rwanda became independent on 1 July 1962. Legislative elections had been held in September the previous year. The PARMEHUTU, the main Hutu political movement, gained 78% of the vote.⁴⁵ Education was nationalised and became just as unequal, with the Hutu now the privileged group. There was a rapid reversal of the school admission quotas, and by the 1970s, entry to all government and assisted schools and tertiary institutions was determined by ethnic and regional quotas⁴⁶ which favoured the Hutu above the Tutsi as the quotas were theoretically aligned to the national proportion of the population of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa (90% Hutu, 9% Tutsi and 1% Twa).⁴⁷ The table below shows the ethnic segregation in Secondary Education between 1962 and 1980. It demonstrates the percentage of Hutu and Tutsi of the total intake.⁴⁸

Academic year	Abahutu (%)	Abatutsi (%)
1962/63	62	36
1976/68	76	23
1972/73	87.2	11
1973/4	89.7	8
1980/81	86	12.4

Overall illiteracy rates remained relatively high although before 1994, while there was a good record of primary school attendance (about 60% of primary age children entered school), as late as 1991 only 9% of Rwandan children were able to study at secondary school.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Longman (1997)

⁴⁵ Prunier, G. (1997) *The Rwanda Crisis: Story of a Genocide*. London: Hurst and Company: 53

⁴⁶ Ibid:39

⁴⁷ In her book, *Left to Tell*, a genocide survivor, Immaculée Ilibagiza, provides a graphic example of how she and a Tutsi boy came top of the class in last year of primary education, but neither gained a place in the secondary school. In the fourth grade the teacher frequently held ethnic roll calls. It was at this time that she first knew that she was Tutsi: 13ff

⁴⁸ Included in NCDC (2006):112

⁴⁹ Des Forges (1999): <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/Rwanda/Geno1-3-09.htm>

The conflict narrative in history education

The narrative as such, was not part of history education in Rwandan schools during the colonial period but what was contained in the conflict narrative was widely disseminated. As the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace in Kigali noted:

Before the history of Rwanda was taught in schools, it was taught in an abstract and indirect way, initially through the writings of the colonial and missionary historiography largely commented and broadcast in the embryonic media...⁵⁰

It was the history introduced into the schools after independence that, the current government has claimed, caused the genocide. During most of the colonial period history education focused mainly on the history of Western Europe and in the upper secondary school, the history of the Belgium.⁵¹ When the history of Rwanda was introduced into the curriculum, it was based on the work of colonial and missionary historians and Kagame,⁵² and, it is said, was used by politicians to politicise the Hutu, identifying them as the oppressed and the Tutsi as the oppressive foreign invaders.⁵³ The curriculum also included the triumph of the Hutu in 1959 and the formation of the Hutu extremist party as the table below indicates (contentious areas italicised).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (2006) *History and Conflicts in Rwanda* Kigali: IRDP: 195

⁵¹ Ibid: 193

⁵² Ibid: 195

⁵³ An example of a narrative that provoked the feeling of 'perennial ethnic revenge' built into the history curriculum is the story of a Tutsi Queen Mother (the Royal lineage was Tutsi) who each time she stood up would lean against a spear on a young Hutu's foot. Nzamukwerekwa, A (2004), *The Rwanda Forum*, Saturday 27th March, CD2, 49'06"

⁵⁴ The table is based on Gasanabo, J-D (2004) *Mémoires et Histoire Scolaire: Le Cas du Rwanda de 1962 à 1994*, Thèse No. 341, Présentée à la Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l'éducation de l'Université de Genève pour obtenir le grade de Docteur es sciences de l'éducation.



THEMES
Theme 1: Origin of the population
Sources of history (oral, written, archaeological)
<i>The peopling of Rwanda</i>
Themes 2 & 3: Ubwoko & Ubughake
<i>Definition of the terms clan, lineage, ethnicity, tribe</i>
<i>Ubughake</i>
Economic life before colonisation
Themes 4 & 5: Evangelisation and Colonisation (Belgium)
Socio-political situation from the time of the first contact with Europeans
Social progress (education, health)
Economic life during colonisation (famines, etc)
Colonial Rwanda: German colonisation (definition, causes, conquest, resistance...); Belgian colonisation.
First World War and Rwanda
1952 decree, elections of 1953 and 1956
Visit of the mandates commission of the UNO
<i>Forced labour (akazi) and taxes (imisoro)</i>
Theme 6: The Period 1959-1962
<i>Social context before 1959</i>
<i>Political parties (Aprosoma, Parmehutu, Rader, Unar)</i>
<i>Communal elections in 1960, Referendum and parliamentary elections of 1961</i>
<i>Revolution of 1959; Hutu Manifesto, victory of Parmehutu</i>
Theme 7: Independent Rwanda
<i>The First Republic (defence of territorial integrity, satisfying the demands of the masses)</i>
<i>First Republic (economic problems)</i>
<i>Second Republic (problems encountered and solutions supplied)</i>
<i>Second Republic (coup d'état of 1973)</i>

The pre-colonial history would have been Kagame's narrative. However, it is not what is in the curriculum documents, but how it is interpreted in the textbooks and by teachers, that contributes to conflict. There is widespread agreement among teachers that the official narrative in school history textbooks before 1994, entrenched ethnic divisions and contributed to tension between Hutu and Tutsi:

Moreover, the history taught was written with the aim of pleasing the then political regime...Thus under colonisation it was said that Tutsi were the only ones who could rule; one sees at which point the hamitic theories put into practice and spread with the support of missionaries were assimilated even by the popular masses. Under the 1st and 2nd republic, the Hutu kingdoms were glorified at the expense of the Nyiginya kingdom.⁵⁵

Some teachers insist that the material used in schools was ‘very dangerous’ and created tension amongst the pupils, even making a direct link between history education and genocide.⁵⁶ Others saw the link between the content of courses such as civics and history and the approach of certain teachers. The subject matter in textbooks was given an ideological bias to polarise pupils. According to a teacher currently in prison, the ‘1959 civil war’ which brought, in his terms, victory for the Hutu and defeat for the Tutsis was taught in a way that made Hutu proud and Tutsis feel inferior:

in school textbooks there were entire chapters about the civil war of 1959, the resounding victory of the Hutus, the humiliating defeat of the Tutsis and the exile of the Tutsis and so on...When we taught such things...the Hutu were swelled with pride...whilst the Tutsis felt inferior.⁵⁷

Still others pointed to the exclusive focus on ethnic division in the textbooks ‘as if they were the only important thing’ and the methodology that required children to learn the facts off by heart as if ‘they were the gospel truth’.⁵⁸

The colonial world had constructed a narrative in which the Social Darwinist myths about race had become Barthes’ ‘universal truth’.⁵⁹ The ethnic consciousness of both

⁵⁵ IRDP (2006) *History and Conflicts in Rwanda* (IRDP, Kigali): 195

⁵⁶ Ibid: 196; African Rights (2001) *The Heart of Education: Assessing Human Rights in Rwanda’s Schools* (African Rights, Kigali):24

⁵⁷ IRDP (2006): 196; see also African Rights (2001), *The Heart of Education*

⁵⁸ African Rights: 24

Tutsis and Hutus had been shaped in the context of the colonial experience and mission education with both seemingly deeply internalising the imposed colonial identities. By the late 1950s, ethnicity had become a discourse that arranged collective memory as a basis for political action⁶⁰ and a justification for the (oppressed) Hutu, for attacking the (oppressors) Tutsi. The first serious conflict occurred in late 1959 and after independence in 1962 an estimated 10 000 Tutsi were killed between December 1963 and January 1964.⁶¹ Further violence occurred during 1972-3 when Habyarimana took over government after a military coup. Each episode of violence resulted in Tutsi refugees fleeing the country. Both Hutu and Tutsi have constructed versions of the past as chosen traumas that cast them as the victim.⁶² The refugee/exile factor became significant in the events of the 1990s with the Tutsi forming their own traumatic collective memory and chosen trauma in exile. This will be examined in the next chapter.

History education and mass participation in the genocide

In the rest of this chapter I will examine the claims that the conflict narrative embedded in history education contributed to the widespread participation of Hutu in the genocide. There have been a number of attempts to explain this phenomenon, few of which are satisfactory. Lemarchand in a recent survey of the current research on Rwanda notes that there 'are few parallels for the sheer depth of the discords and disagreements the 1994 genocide has generated among observers, survivors and perpetrators'.⁶³ Adding to the complexity is the enormous volume of literature that has been generated, ranging from journalistic accounts to scholarly works, from first person testimonies by survivors to interviews with convicted killer, from travel writing to in-depth investigations by human rights organisation, from official inquests

⁵⁹ Barthes, R. (1957) *Mythologies*, discussed in lectures on Roland Barthes: *Mythologies (1957)* at <http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/~os0tmc/myth.htm> Accessed 12 December 2007

⁶⁰ Jewsiewicki, B. (1989): 324

⁶¹ Prunier (1997): 56

⁶² A Rwandan exile (Hutu) in Cape Town told me that all the violence since independence had been the Hutu responding to Tutsi aggression. February 2006. Also Eltringham, N. (2004) *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* London: Pluto Press, London. The last chapter deals with the two versions of Rwanda's past.

⁶³ Lemarchand, R. (2007) Scholarly Review: Rwanda: The state of Research. *The Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence* <http://www.massviolence.org> Accessed 10 May 2009 : 1

by aid agencies and international commission to UN reports.⁶⁴ This makes it extremely difficult for a researcher to navigate the literature.

There is general agreement among researchers that the precipitating factor behind the genocide was the direct hit on the plane carrying the president of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana, as it was about to land in Kigali by the surface-to-air missile. This occurred on the night of the 6 April. Secondly, the first to be killed on the 7 April were all Hutu and included the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana and other prominent ministers in the government. None of them were Hutu Power politicians. However, the causes of genocide as well as the motivation for participation in the slaughter continue to be debated by historians and political scientists. These include massive poverty and ongoing economic crisis in Rwanda; intra-Hutu power struggles; ideological manipulation of the past by Hutu Power politicians and resurrected during 1992-4 in the form of massive state propaganda; the manipulation of fear during war; and the local level of organisation of the state and political party which encouraged and coerced people into participating.⁶⁵ It is not within the scope of this study to take these debates further; for the purposes of this research, I will focus on the claims about history education as a motive for participation in mass killings by ordinary Rwandans. The belief in this negative role of history education continues to be wide spread in Rwanda today.

Paul Rusesabagina believes that the official history was widely known and had been internalised:

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ USAID (2002) *Rwanda Democracy and Governance Assessment* Washington: USAID Office for Democracy and Governance:18 Also: Des Forges (1999) *Leave none to tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. New York: Human Rights Watch; Paris: International Federation of Human Rights, <http://hrw.org/reports/1999/Geno1-15> (Accessed 8/29/2005) Apart from the work of the Newburys and Des Forges, see also for example, Eltringham, N (2004) *Accounting for horror – Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* London: Pluto Press; Gourevitch, P (1998) *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: stories from Rwanda* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux; Mamdani, M (2001) *When Victims Become Killers – Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* Princeton: Princeton University Press & David Philip, Cape Town; Pottier, J. (2002) *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the late Twentieth Century* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Prunier, G (1995 & 1997) *The Rwanda Crisis – History of a Genocide* London: Hurst and Co.; Straus (2006)

History is a serious business in my country. You might say that it is a matter of life and death. It is a rare person here, even the poorest grower of bananas, who cannot rattle off a string of significant dates in Rwanda's past and tell you exactly what they mean to him and his family. They are like beads on our national necklace: 1885, 1959, 1973, 1990, 1994...We are obsessed with the past. And everyone here tries to make it fit his own ends.⁶⁶

The 'beads on the national necklace' are the dates of major historical events from the imposition of colonial rule that would have been included in all textbooks: beginning of colonial rule; the Hutu uprising that began a process which ended in independence in 1962; the coup d'état by Hutu military officers from the north; the invasion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) that began the conflict which was able to mask the preparations for genocide; and of course, the genocide itself. This raises questions about how the 'poorest grower of bananas' came to have such knowledge of official Rwandan history and to what extent the conflict narrative of the school history textbooks, particularly about the origins of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa and the oppression of Hutu by Tutsi, had been internalised to the extent to which the narrative caused them to take part in the mass killings. Before the genocide, although Rwanda had more than 60% of children in primary school, access to secondary education was the lowest in Africa and the national illiteracy rate stood at around 56%.⁶⁷ Perhaps part of the answer lies in these statistics – the majority of those who were exposed to the official narrative in formal schooling would have received it unprocessed at an impressionable age in the primary school.

Jean-Damascène Gasanabo, in a study of the relationship between narratives in history textbooks and the extent to which these influenced the perceptions of Rwandans about their past, interviewed a cross section of people. He included a range

⁶⁶ Rusesabagina (2006):18

⁶⁷ Figures from UNICEF (1996) and World Bank (1989) quoted in Kaun, A.M. (2000) *Education as a Tool for Peace in War-Torn Societies; the Case of Rwanda and the African Great Lakes* Geneva: University of Colorado & School for International Training. http://www/sit-edu-geneva.ch/A.%20Kaun_education_as_a_tool_for_peace_in.htm Accessed 11 April 2007

of ages and those who had gone to school and those who had not.⁶⁸ What emerged from his research was that although the attitudes to the narrative differed, there was a general knowledge of the elements of the official narrative that appeared in the school textbooks, even though many Rwandans had not and did not attend school. He found that those Hutu or Tutsi, who learnt history only in primary and secondary school, believed what they had read in their textbooks. University students were more sceptical. Further, there was a correlation between the official narrative and community vernacular narratives of those who did not go to school. The extent, however, to which the school and community narratives were aligned, differed according to the age of the interviewees. The younger interviewees who had not attended schools, aligned themselves closely with the school narratives, while the older interviewees were less inclined to accept what was being taught in schools. Gasanabo does not, however, engage with the issue of this knowledge of history being a motivating factor in the mass participation in genocide. So although there was knowledge, it cannot be claimed without qualification that direct exposure to the conflict narrative in history education led to mass participation in the genocide.

Gasanabo's research raises another issue. Given that so many did have knowledge of the official narrative, how did those who had not attended school acquire that knowledge? Part of the answer seems to lie in the use of the media for propaganda and rallying the Hutu behind the cause of genocide. The power of the mass media in inciting mass participation in the genocide was investigated in the trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), of three media executives, Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, who had set up the racist radio station Radio Milles Collines, and Hassan Ngeze of the racist newspaper, Kangura.⁶⁹ The chief propagandist for popular Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM or Radio Milles Collines) was Ferdinand Nahimana a former history professor at the National University, who studied at the University of Paris. Radio

⁶⁸ Gasanabo, J-D. (2001) *Construction des memoires collectives par l'histoire à l'école et/ou en dehors de l'école: Le cas du Rwanda dans la période de 1962 à 1994*, presented at Actes du VIII Congrès de l'Association pour la Recherche InterCultuelle (ARIC), Université de Genève – 24-28 septembre: <http://www.unige.ch/fapse/SSE/groups/aric>

⁶⁹ Temple-Raston, D. (2005) *Justice on the Grass* New York: Free Press has a full account of the media trial.

Milles Collines began its broadcasts in 1993 and in the months leading up to the genocide, it urged the Hutu to take up arms against the Tutsi, to kill the ‘cockroaches’ and send them back across the river. Radio Milles Collines’ version of Rwandan history as constructed by Nahimana, followed the official history - the Tutsi-Hamite thesis of migration and ‘foreign’ invasion and the ethnic domination and exploitation of the Hutu by the Tutsi. An example of the rhetoric broadcast was that:

Tutsi are nomads and invaders who came to Rwanda in search of pasture, but because they are so cunning and malicious, the Tutsi managed to stay and rule. If you allow the Tutsi-Hamites to come back, they will not only rule you in Rwanda, but will also extend their power throughout the Great Lakes Region.⁷⁰

Those who could read could also get a dose of anti-Tutsi rhetoric from journalist Hassan Ngeze of the *Kangura*, a journal founded in 1990 as the mouthpiece of the radical Hutu. The ethnic hatred that permeated *Kangura* had the effect of poison and its message of prejudice and fear contributed to paving the way for massacres of the Tutsi population.⁷¹ From as early as 1991 *Kangura* was warning Hutu against Tutsi:

Hutu, be united like Tutsi who are one...Don’t you know that it is when Hutu will unite that they will be able to fight the Tutsi? But if we remain divided, we will continue being instruments in the hands of Tutsi who will make us turn in one direction at their will until the monarchy is restored.⁷²

By February 1994 the rhetoric against the Tutsi in the *Kangura* had intensified. In an article entitled ‘Final Attack’ it was said:

⁷⁰ RTLM, 2 December 1993, translated from Kinyarwanda by Charles Mironko and quoted in Mironko, C. (2007) The effect of RTLM’s rhetoric of ethnic hatred in rural Rwanda, in Thompson, A. (ed) (2007) *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (Pluto Press/Fountain Publishers/IDRC) http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-106013-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html Accessed 3 December 2007

⁷¹ Temple-Raston (2005): 234

⁷² *Kangura*, No. 21, August 1991 quoted in National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) (2006) *The Teaching of History of Rwanda: a Participatory Approach*. NCDC & Regents of the University of California: 136. <http://www.hrcberkeley.org/pdfs/Rwanda-Curriculum-English1.pdf> Accessed 1 September 2007

We have indications that the RPF will soon launch other attacks in Kigali from all sides. We know where the cockroaches are. If they look for us, they had better watch out.⁷³

The verdict from the trial was that the media, in particular radio, played a significant role in Rwandan society where there were many who were illiterate and telephones were few. Until 1991 Rwanda was a one-party state and the radio, Radio Rwanda, was an important way of making government announcements, including the lists of candidates admitted to secondary schools, but also for disseminating government information and propaganda.⁷⁴ The dangerous power of radio was first demonstrated in 1992, when Radio Rwanda was used to promote the killing of Tutsi in Bugesera, south of the capital, Kigali. It was a ‘dress rehearsal’ for Nahimana who had taken up a post with Radio Rwanda on his return from studying in Paris. Since his appointment, Nahimana had repeatedly broadcast his Hutu version of Rwandan history, but his power was not appreciated until the Bugesera killings. On 3 March, Nahimana handed journalists a communiqué, which the radio repeatedly broadcast, supposedly sent by a human rights group based in Nairobi, warning that Hutu in Bugesera would be attacked by Tutsi. Local officials built onto the radio announcement to convince Hutu that they needed to protect themselves by attacking first. Hundreds of Tutsi were killed in the action.⁷⁵

Although the 1992 attack helps us to understand the power of the radio, it still does not tell us whether the message to kill reached all areas of Rwanda in 1994, and whether the broadcasts, and therefore the official narrative, resulted in mass participation. Charles Mironko, a Tutsi who grew up in exile, interviewed a number of Hutu perpetrators in Rwandan prisons.⁷⁶ Many of those interviewed claimed that they did not have radios and therefore had not heard the broadcasts. Yet they demonstrated

⁷³ Quoted in Temple-Raston (2005): 41

⁷⁴ Des Forges, A. (2007) Call to genocide: radio in Rwanda, 1994 in Thompson, A. (ed) (2007) *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* Pluto Press/Fountain Publishers/IDRC http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-106013-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html Accessed 3 December 2007

⁷⁵ Ibid. Also Temple-Raston (2005): 27

⁷⁶ Mironko, C. (2007) The effect of RTLM’s rhetoric of ethnic hatred in rural Rwanda, in Thompson, A. (ed) (2007) *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* Pluto Press/Fountain Publishers/IDRC http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-106013-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html Accessed 3 December 2007

knowledge of the content of the broadcasts that identified the Tutsi as ‘their enemies, outsiders, invaders and cunning manipulators’ and called them to action against them. When questioned further, many said that they had heard the messages of the radio station through others and responded only when the local leaders threatened them into action against their neighbours. Mironko argues that the unlike those who were educated and therefore exposed to a distorted official narrative at school, uneducated rural peasants needed the radio messages to reinforce the message that ‘the Tutsi is the enemy’ and the local structures to goad them into taking action against the Tutsi.⁷⁷ The station needed to make a particular effort to target rural peasants because ‘they were seen as being on the margins of ethnic politics’ and not ‘naturally inclined’ to take action against their Tutsi neighbours.

Mironko further argues that the attacks took place within the context of a social and political mechanism, *igitero* or ‘mob attack’ that drew on communal hunting traditions and that ‘countless ordinary civilians’ were coerced into taking part in the killing’.⁷⁸ The reasons put forward by interviewees for taking part in the *ibitero* (pl) had little to do with the manipulation of identity through history. Motives articulated by the interviewees included fear of being killed themselves if they did not participate; fear that the Tutsi would seize their land if they were not stopped; greed; coercion; and the use of drink and drugs.⁷⁹ Longman and Rutagengwa’s research showed a similar trend: that while the current Rwandan government regards the genocide as deeply rooted in Rwandan history, the study participants were more likely to blame the genocide on more immediate causes such as bad politicians and greed.⁸⁰ Straus’s conclusions support and add to the findings of Mironko, Longman and Rutagengwa. Rather than ideological factors behind mass participation in the genocide, Straus argues that the principal mechanisms were wartime uncertainty and

⁷⁷ Ibid. ‘The Tutsi is the enemy’ was a phrase that was repeatedly articulated in the interviews quoted by Mironko.

⁷⁸ Mironko, C. (n.d.) *Igitero: means and motive in the Rwandan genocide*; Mironko, C. (2004) *Ibitero: Means and Motive in the Rwandan genocide*, chapter adapted from the author’s PhD dissertation entitled *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder: An Analysis of Perpetrators in the Rwandan Genocide* Yale University: 2004 <http://research.yale.edu/ycias/database/files/GS23.pdf> (accessed 3 December 2007)

⁷⁹ Mironko (n.d.)

⁸⁰ Longman & Rutagengwa (2004):169

fear; social pressure; and opportunity. Perpetrators wanted to protect themselves during war and a period of intense fear and uncertainty.⁸¹ War was the context that was critical to understanding the extent of the violence and why so many individuals agreed to take part in the killing.⁸² Clearly, while there is a general agreement that the history taught in schools was biased; the research weakens the official claim that history education played a central role in the genocide. It also cannot be regarded as the major cause of individual participation in the slaughter at the local rural level.

An interesting omission in all of the research dealing with history narratives and the genocide is the lack of engagement with oral or vernacular history and the way it may have shaped perceptions about the past. African oral languages, apart from being the media of communication, are ‘repositories of culture, history, millennial values and cherished beliefs.’⁸³ Colonialism devalued oral traditions and the introduction of European languages de-legitimized the indigenous way of expression. However, more recently oral traditions have been recognised as legitimate sources of information about the past. Colonialism was a relatively recent experience and in the administrative reorganisation, Hutu chiefs at times were deposed and replaced with Tutsi. There is clearly a strong vernacular memory of these events and of Hutu exploitation by Tutsi, but it is ignored. A tantalizing glimpse of the existence of the vernacular histories is provided by Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure in an article discussing a reading of *Ubwiru*, Rwandan oral poetry from the royal court of the *nyiginya* kings. Mvuyekure describes the dynastic drum, *Karinga*, which was decorated with the mummified testicles of defeated Hutu kings (*Abahinza*). He continues:

It should be made clear that...most Rwandans...have heard about, *by way of story telling*, the gory images and atrocities that the early Nyiginya kings committed against Abahinza. *I myself learned from my father (who used to work as a servant to a Tutsi chief) and my uncles*

⁸¹ Straus (2006): 9

⁸² Ibid: 7

⁸³ Abdi, A.A. (2007) Oral Societies and Colonial Experiences: Sub-Saharan Africa and the *de facto* power of the written word, *International Education* (Fall): 42 – 59
<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=4&hid=103&sid=11b70aaa-f06d-4c14-9af8905fd84ec314%40sessionmgr106> Accessed 11 July 2008

how Tutsi kings used to castrate Hutu kings to decorate Karinga and other dynastic drums.⁸⁴

There are indications that Mvuyekure may be a Hutu, and if so, one needs to ask to what extent his comments are nuanced by the existence of the contrasting Hutu and Tutsi narratives about the past and the belief fostered by the Habyarimana regime that it was the Tutsi's fault that they were killed?⁸⁵ Whatever the answer to that is, it is not immediately relevant. What is important is that he demonstrates the existence of a strong vernacular tradition. This is also alluded to in the report of the Kigali-based Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace. In the introduction the Director remarked that the descendants of the local Hutu chiefs provided the authors of the report with information.⁸⁶ The report later notes that although the transmission of knowledge through the family has been diluted by modern media, the 'family circle', be it Hutu or Tutsi, still plays a major role in determining what young people think. 'People check out at home what the teacher said on the history of Rwanda'.⁸⁷ This provides an indication of the extent to which vernacular histories inform the way in which history education is received by pupils. This is a valuable area of research waiting for someone to take up.

The judgement at the ICTR media trial found that the genocide would have happened without the radio station and *Kangura*, but that the killing could not have spread so efficiently and so quickly had it not been for the Radio Milles Collines' call to action. This was also helped by the existence of local political structures. The people could not have been so quickly mobilised against the Tutsi had it not been for the local leaders and the 'civil defence' units that had been set up in every community

⁸⁴ Mvuyekure, Dr Pierre-Damien (n.d.) The Rwandan Tragedy: Why Hutu and Tutsi cannot get along – a reading of *Ubwiru*, Rwandan oral poetry from the royal court, *Konch Magazine*, <http://www.ishmaelreedpub.com/articles/mvuyekure2.html> Accessed 31 December 2007 My emphasis.

⁸⁵ Hilsum, *The Guardian*, 11 July 1994, quoted in Pottier (2002): 39

⁸⁶ Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (2006) *History and conflicts in Rwanda*, (IRDP, Kigali): iii. As mentioned, many Hutu chiefs were deposed and replaced with Tutsi in the colonial period. The same happened in South Africa during apartheid when 'homelands' were created for 'tribes'. If the hereditary ruler was uncooperative he was simply deposed and replaced with someone who would cooperate with the apartheid government. What is significant is that in South Africa the oral tradition of the rightful ruler continued to be kept alive.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 193

throughout the country.⁸⁸ The link between the radio broadcasts and the action taken by local leaders in drawing Hutu into the killing squads is born out by the statements made by Mironko's interviewees. Thus the media broadcasts were not the cause of genocide, but were clearly a major element in a premeditated plan for mass slaughter, conveying orders to militia and groups already involved in the slaughter and manipulating history in the broadcasts to keep passions at fever pitch during the final months before the genocide. The judgement further found that

the RTLM broadcasts exploited the history of Tutsi privilege and Hutu disadvantage, and the fear of war, to whip Rwandans into a frenzy of hatred and violence. The Interahamwe and other militias listened to RTLM and acted on the information that was broadcast. RTLM actively encouraged them to kill, relentlessly sending the message the Tutsi were the enemy and had to be eliminated once and for all.⁸⁹

The judgement also found that Ferdinand Nahimana, one of a new generation of Rwandan historians to emerge in post-colonial period, was the driving force behind the anti-Tutsi rhetoric. He had become a Hutu intellectual who used his skills for the cause of ethnic hatred. History had been used as a tool for inciting racial hatred by a professional historian who would have known that the colonial Hamitic theory of the migration of the Tutsi to Rwanda had been discredited, but who chose to use it to incite violence. The slow change in school narratives, and the presence of a vernacular tradition casting Tutsi as oppressors, meant that the majority of Rwandans still believed it. Furthermore, colonialism with its Hutu exploitation and Tutsi privilege was still within living memory of many of the older generation. The radio broadcasts threatened the return of the Tutsi to rule; that *all* Hutu were at risk of being attacked, overwhelmed, re-colonised and exploited by *all* Tutsi.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Temple-Raston (2005): 202. See also Straus (2006)

⁸⁹ Temple-Raston (2005): 233

⁹⁰ Des Forges (1999)

Conclusion

Colonial Rwanda saw the construction of an official history that had legitimised minority Tutsi interests at the expense of the majority Hutu. When the Hutu gained control at independence, official history became a narrative of chosen trauma with Hutu as victims and Tutsi as perpetrators. While official history certainly did not cause genocide, what became clear is that memory and identity located in a sense of past injustices and forged into a narrative of chosen trauma, can fuel a hatred that makes violence against ‘the other’ imaginable. The key issue of the spread of Hutu feelings and judgement and the raising of it to the level where it incited genocide is addressed earlier: there were multiple and contested reasons but a major root cause was the Tutsi creation of a view of the Hutu past that led the Hutu to dehumanise the Tutsi and to justify their actions in terms of the threat that the Tutsi posed.

However, limiting the official rhetoric to Hutu perpetrators, avoids engaging with a more nuanced analysis of the genocide. Lemarchand, in his overview of scholarly research, refers to the work of Guichaoua into the dynamics of conflict in Butare which suggests that the genocide was not a straightforward Hutu-Tutsi conflict. Even after April 19, when the slaughter got underway, people were killed not because they were Hutu or Tutsi, but because ‘they had already stated openly their opposition to Hutu extremists, and because they challenged or refused to toe the political line of the new authorities promoted on April 8.’⁹¹ Straus argues that in fact, the involvement of Hutu was not as widespread as some claim and that that most of the killing was done by perhaps 10 per cent of the *génocidaires*, i.e. “soldiers, paramilitaries, and extremely zealous killers”, while the remaining 90 per cent, made up of “non-hardcore civilians”, might account for no more than 25 per cent of the killings.⁹²

The tension between past and present remains very much alive and unresolved. The current challenge facing Rwanda is the construction of a history curriculum that provides for the deconstruction of the myths race and ethnicity and creates a history for the common good. A moratorium was declared on the teaching of Rwandan

⁹¹ Lemarchand (2007) reviewing the research of Guichaoua. Guichaoua, A (2005) *Rwanda 1994 : Les politiques du génocide a Butare*. (Paris: Karthala)

⁹² Straus, S (2004) How many perpetrators were there in the Rwandan Patriotic Front? An estimate. *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol. 6, No 1: 95

history in primary schools after 1994. There is still no real resolution on what would constitute an acceptable history curriculum even while a new official narrative has been very publicly disseminated. The next chapter examines the tensions in Rwandan society about the past, the debates around history education and the construction of a new official narrative which is being disseminated in alternative sites of education and public spaces.

The next chapter will examine the way in which the post-conflict state engages with the conflict narrative and the construction of memory and identity not only in education policy but in the political arena and in public spaces during commemorative events. It also engages with the dissemination of the new narrative and the implications of this narrative in terms of ongoing cycles of violence when trauma is unresolved.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MEMORY, IDENTITY AND HISTORY EDUCATION IN POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the construction of the conflict narrative in colonial Rwanda, its use in post-colonial history education to justify Hutu action against Tutsi and alluded to the claims of the current government in Rwanda that history education was a major contributor to genocide. This chapter examines how the Rwandan state deals with the conflict narrative in its recent history and how this grappling with the past is engaged with in the school curriculum.

The genocide ended with a military victory by the invading Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by Rwandan exiles from Uganda. The military victory in theory left the new RPF government with the widest discretion to decide how to deal with the past. However, this was not an ordinary military victory: there have been consistent reports of human rights abuses carried out by the RPF; and it was a victory of a minority over the majority. This has meant that the Tutsi-led government continues to feel deeply vulnerable:

The key dilemma [in Rwanda] is how to build a democracy that can incorporate a *guilty majority* alongside an aggrieved and *fearful minority* in a single political community... While the minority demands justice, the majority calls for democracy. The two demands appear as irreconcilable, for the minority sees democracy as an agenda for completing the genocide, and the majority sees justice as a self-serving mask for fortifying minority power.¹

The victory of a minority over a majority is a victory that does not allow for vigilance to be relaxed. Mamdani has pointed out that while most recognise that the

¹ Mamdani, M. (2001) *When Victims become Killers*. Princeton University Press: 266; 267

precondition for victor's justice is, clearly, victory, there are few that recognise its price: the victor must remain on constant guard lest the spoils of victory be snatched away. A gaoler is tied to a gaol just as surely as the prisoner – a victor must equally live in anticipation and fear of the next round of battle.²

This has had major implications for post-1994 education policy and for the way in which the conflict narrative is engaged with within the broader context of history education. There are a number of elements to be considered in understanding this particular post-conflict context. Firstly, military victory enables the imposition of education policies, including a new national narrative, without negotiation with those who represent the defeated. Secondly, at a very powerful intersecting level, there is the traumatic legacy of genocide and the fear of the minority of possible unfinished business of the majority. This is discernable in the language of education policy and the moratorium placed on the teaching of Rwandan history. And lastly, the 'exile factor' in Rwanda, particularly the dominance of the returning exiles from Uganda in government and education, has had implications for curriculum in general and history education in particular.

The first section of this chapter examines the legacy of trauma as a context for the construction of education policy that signals the break with the past. The fear of 'the next round of battle' is tied to the traumatic legacy. Those who survived the genocide live with the memories of the evidence of the killing; the mutilated bodies piled up in the street, the churches, the schools and the fields. Schools had been sites of massacres and many schools and school grounds had been 'turned into stinking stores of human bodies'.³ The genocide was accompanied by wide-scale rape and infection with the HIV virus. Thousands of traumatised survivors were pregnant with unwanted babies, the *enfants de mauvais souvenirs* (children of bad memories)⁴ that were born in early 1995. The women allowed to live after being raped were told by the

² Ibid: 271

³ OAU (2000): 17:6

⁴ Temple-Raston (2005): 154

*Interahamwe*⁵ that they were spared so they could ‘die of sadness’, either because of the AIDS they had contracted or because they would be forced to raise a child conceived in a time of treachery.⁶ Of particular relevance to education, an estimated 100 000 children lost their parents or were separated from them. Virtually all children have lived through severely traumatising experiences during the war, either watching family members being tortured and killed, or being themselves wounded or threatened.⁷ UNICEF calculated that five of every six of the children who survived had at the least witnessed bloodshed.⁸ A decade after the genocide, the trauma was still deep. A psychologist, who attended the 10th anniversary commemorations of the genocide in Kigali, witnessed the breakdown of a number of survivors, screaming in terror in the packed stadium. She noted that ‘indeed, time alone doesn’t heal trauma. For many people, ten years of silent suffering had been just too overwhelming.’⁹

By the end of the genocide, Rwanda had become a waste land: of seven million inhabitants before the genocide, about three-quarters had been killed, displaced, or had fled.¹⁰ As the RPF victory became certain, refugees had begun fleeing the country - more than a million estimated walking along a stretch of road barely 60 kilometres long. Hutu authorities tried to ‘stampede’ the crowd further towards the Zaire border and soldiers fired their weapons in the air to urge the people on.¹¹ As Hutu were fleeing the country, small numbers of Tutsi refugees who had spent more than 30

⁵ The *interahamwa* militia was set up by the MRND, the single legal political party formed in 1974 by the President, General Habyarimana. The shooting down of his plane in 1994 as he returned to Kigali was the signal that unleashed the genocide. The *interahamwa* was a paramilitary group and formed the main killing squads during the genocide.

⁶ Temple-Raston (2005): 155

⁷ Obura, A. (2003) *Never Again: educational reconstruction in Rwanda*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP): 50

⁸ UNICEF, ‘Exposure to War Related Violence Among Rwandan Children and Adolescents’ quoted in OAU (2000): 17.3

⁹ Mukanoheli, E. (2004) *The Prevalence of Trauma in Rwanda a Decade after Genocide*.

<http://crusebereavementcare.org.uk/intlconf/pdfs/Mukanoheli%20Eugenie.pdf> Accessed 28 January 2008. Eugénie Mukanoheli has an MA in counselling and guidance and works with survivors in Rwanda.

¹⁰ OAU (2000) 17.2

¹¹ *Le Monde* (17-18 July) quoted in Prunier (1997): 298

years in Uganda were beginning to move back into Rwanda, driving thousands of head of cattle before them.¹²

The founding ideology of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in post-genocide Rwanda is the memory of the genocide and the moral compulsion never to let it happen again.¹³ The first two founding principles of the state in Article 9 of the new Constitution adopted in 2003, are to fight the ‘ideology of genocide and all its manifestations’ and to eradicate ‘ethnic, regional and other divisions’ and to promote national unity.¹⁴ Evidence suggests that the military victory linked to the founding ideology provides the key to understanding the political and educational discourses in Rwanda, and the disjuncture between the political discourse of democracy and the unity of all Rwandans and the increasingly authoritarian nature of the regime. Numerous international observer reports have warned against the increasing authoritarianism and intolerance of freedom of speech and political expression in Rwanda.¹⁵ Political analysts insist that the discourse of unity that stresses the absence of ethnic identities is a means of masking the monopoly by Tutsi military of political power.¹⁶ This criticism may be true, however evidence suggests, that international calls for greater democratisation of Rwandan society will continue to be ignored while this fear remains an overriding reality.¹⁷ The practice of democracy is for the RPF, in reality, unthinkable.

¹² Footnote in Prunier: 16 000 Tutsi crossed over from Uganda in the first two weeks of July. (SWB/Radio France Internationale, 13 July 1994). Prunier (1997):298

¹³ Reyntjens, F. (2004) Rwanda, ten years on: from genocide to dictatorship *African Affairs* 103: 177-210

¹⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003

¹⁵ For example, Human Rights Watch regularly put out reports on Rwanda; academics such as Reyntjens and authors such as Temple-Raston have written of the lack of political freedom and increasing authoritarianism. They have also pointed to the international feelings of guilt about the genocide which seems to prevent any real criticism of President Kagame. However, seeing his response in terms of the fear of renewed genocide does provide some understanding of his dilemma. See also Reyntjens (2004)

¹⁶ Bradol, J-H. & Guibert, A. (1997) Le temps des assassins et l’espace humanitaire, Rwanda, Kivu, 1994-1997, *Hérodote* 86-7, quoted in Reyntjens (2004)

¹⁷ Rwandans express fears of what might happen if there is no strong government and ask whether it is not better to have good governance that is authoritarian than greater democracy with the threat of renewed violence. This was said to me by a Rwandan driver who took me to a number of inland genocide sites.

A major and continuing issue for Rwandan reconstruction of education is the heavy dependency on international aid that impacts on education policy. It has been argued that Rwanda displays a sense of entitlement when dealing with the international community, for not coming to their aid in the dark days of genocide. The donor community feels guilty for failing to do something to end genocide and has tended to provide enormous amounts of aid, closing its eyes to the disturbing signals of increasing authoritarianism within Rwanda. Some analysts believe that the government has exploited the ‘*Never Again*’ genocide credit that the new regime in Kigali enjoyed in the years immediately after 1994, to get foreign aid.¹⁸ The dependence on aid has significant implications for the shape and recovery of education particularly in the country programmes that have to be aligned to the donor requirements, such as the Education for All (EFA) or the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).¹⁹

Understanding the trauma and fear in the political context assists in understanding the discourse in Rwanda’s education policy, the way in which Rwanda is dealing with the conflict narrative and the exercise of the politics of emotion in the new official public narrative. It also explains the moratorium placed on the teaching of Rwandan history in primary schools in 1994 and the lack of political will in terms of reintroducing Rwandan history into formal history education and the widespread political re-education programmes at alternative sites of education.

While South Africa had inherited a severely fragmented education system which had to be reorganised, Rwanda had to rebuild an entire infrastructure and system that had been shattered during the genocide. There had been an erosion of faith in the education system. School buildings had been demolished, burned, looted and pillaged, the furniture smashed and looted and documents destroyed, stolen and scattered. Three-quarters of all primary schools had been damaged. Of the 1 836

¹⁸ Reyntjens (2004): 103; 177-210; Mamdani also refers to this in his book ‘*When Victims become Killers*’ (2001). A similar situation developed in Israel in relation to any action taken by Israel against the Palestinians.

¹⁹ The three main partners in education are DfID, UNESCO and World Bank. MINEDUC website; Rwanda has over 80 international NGOs working in the country, Directory of Development Organisations (2006) Vol 1: <http://www.devdir.org/>

schools before the genocide, by October 1994 only 648 were still operational. The Ministry of Education could not operate. Ministerial staff had fled and many had been massacred.²⁰ Rebuilding infrastructure and getting schools up and running, took immediate priority over curriculum issues. The Government of National Unity set up in July 1994 saw its first task as getting children back to school and needed the infrastructure to do this. A Minister of Education was appointed; over the next weeks individual staff trickled back from exile or from hiding; they returned to a shelled building, broken furniture, burnt and torn papers, dust, rubble and stones. There was not one chair to sit on and no one knew how many colleagues had been killed.²¹ Few curriculum documents had survived and textbooks and other resources had been destroyed.

Re-establishing primary education was the first target. Schools were reopened in September 1994, but because neighbours, teachers, doctors and religious leaders had taken part in the genocide, trust in social institutions, including schools, was destroyed and replaced by fear, hostility and insecurity.²² There was also profound suspicion amongst parents and children because so many schools had been murder sites. Government representatives travelled around the country trying to re-establish credibility in the education system and entice pupils back into schools using radio, public speeches and regional leaders.²³ Slowly the parents brought their children back to school. The next target was Grade 12 (Senior 6) which restarted on 12 October 1994. The Ministry considered it vital to keep these pupils in the system, to enable them to complete their year 12 programme properly and to give them a certificate at the end of it. The plan was to use these graduates immediately as new primary school teachers.²⁴ Almost simultaneously with reopening schools, the inequalities in the school admission system and the curriculum came under scrutiny. A first and ideologically important step was lifting the ethnic quotas on school

²⁰ Obura (2003): 46-49 gives a detailed description of Rwandan education after the genocide.

²¹ Much of the information in this section is based on the 2003 IIEP Report by Anna Obura.

²² Kaun (2000):4/13

²³ Obura (2003): 46-49

²⁴ Ibid: 58

admissions and opening education to all. Almost simultaneously attention was given to the pre-1994 curriculum.

The next section examines the education policy processes embarked on by the new government that signalled the transforming nation; the construction of memory and identity in education policy; and the ways in which the politics of memory, identity and education intersected. The military victory, legacy of trauma and the influence on government policy of the returning exiles have all had an influence on education policy.

Restructuring education and education policy

While the government set up in July 1994 was technically a Government of National Unity, it was dominated by the Rwandan Patriot Front, and in particular, returned Ugandan exiles.²⁵ The current political discourse is of the unity of all Rwandans: one nation, one language, one culture, and in pre-colonial times, one religion. It has been supported by the construction of a new national narrative which has located the unity of Rwandans in a ‘mythological’ pre-colonial past. Before colonialism, it is asserted, Rwandans were one nation, with one culture, one language and one religion, a ‘highly centralised kingdom’ of peaceful co-existence under a king who ruled for the mutual benefit of all. While there were Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, these were socio-economic identities and all were united by belonging to the same clans.²⁶ The colonial period divided the ‘nation’ destroying the unity.²⁷ From 1959 onwards, the population of the Batutsi was targeted, causing hundreds and thousands of deaths, and a Diaspora of some two million Rwandese people.²⁸ According to the genocide narrative on the official website, the 1994 genocide was a carefully planned and executed exercise and was the culmination of a number of ‘vicious attacks’ and ‘cycles of genocide’ that

²⁵ Prunier (1995:1997): 329ff

²⁶ Republic of Rwanda, Office of the President (1999) Group report on the ‘Unity of the Rwandans’, in *Report on the reflection meetings held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999* : 19

²⁷ One document claims that colonisers ‘gnawed, little by little, the unity of the Rwandans, until it was destroyed’. Republic of Rwanda, Office of the President (1999) Group report on the ‘Unity of the Rwandans’, in *Report on the reflection meetings held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999* : 19

²⁸ Official website of the Government of Rwanda: <http://www.gov.rw/>

occurred in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁹ It was a history constructed by Tutsi refugees in forced exile, mainly in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a way of promoting a narrative of the past that would prevent the Tutsi facing ethnic persecution again in the future.³⁰ The narrative has all the elements of Malkki's 'mythico-history'. Malkki, in her interviews with Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, noted a pattern of narrative devices which created an interpretive framework of the Hutu past that was neither myth nor history, but a 'subversive recasting and re-interpretation of [the past] in fundamentally moral terms. It was a narrative that continually explored, reiterated, and emphasized the boundaries between self and other, Hutu and Tutsi, and good and evil.'³¹

Malkki identified clusters of themes in the Hutu narrative connected to historical issues and events. In many instances the interpretation is the obverse of the official Rwandan narrative. Themes include the foundation myth of the pre-colonial golden age of social harmony and equality, the arrival of the Tutsi from the north; their theft of power from 'native' Hutu and their institution of a social hierarchy and monarchy; the colonial period and the role of the Belgian colonial authorities as protectors of the Hutu; the post-colonial period and founding of an independent republic; and finally the 1972 massacre and Hutu flight from Burundi.³² It is a narrative that is both closely aligned to the conflict narrative that was embedded in history education in Rwanda before 1994 and contains elements of the current official version of Rwanda's past,

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Freedman, et. al (2008) and Pottier (2002): 111. Given the relatively small pool of academics in Rwanda it is probably understandable that the few names keep coming up in relation to the new narrative. For example: a religious grouping, Light and Society, that produces pamphlets supporting the RPF include Déogratias Byanafashe (who was in exile in the DRC) and Paul Rutayisire, who are prominent historians from the National University. Byanafashe and Rutayisire were also members of a conference in December 1995 which made recommendations to the Office of the President on 'Genocide, Impunity and Accountability: Muzungu, Rutayisire and two other members of the Light and Society group were members of the Dialogue for a national and international response'; a series of 'high-level' meetings held in the Office of the President of Rwanda from May 1998 – March 1999 to consider issues of 'The Unity of the Rwandans: Democracy, Justice, Economy and Security, 3 of them members of the sub-group responsible for writing the section on the Unity of the Rwandans; Byanafashe was the chief supervisor and Rutayisire a contributor in the development of a history resource manual, 'the Teaching of History of Rwanda, a Participatory Approach' co-ordinated by the University of California in 2006. It is probably fair to suggest that they have played an important part in the shaping of the Rwandan narrative.

³¹ Malkki, L. (1995) *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press): 53

³² Ibid: 58ff

most notably the view of the pre-colonial past. It also reveals an almost stubborn adherence to the colonial interpretation of African history with its Hamitic migration into the region. There is some evidence that Hutu in Rwanda hold to a similar version of the past which carries the potential for future conflict.

The new official master narrative in Rwanda is being widely disseminated in policy documents, the media and National Unity and Reconciliation Commission education camps. Locating memory and identity in pre-colonial Rwanda provides a way of engaging less deeply with the traumatic knowledge of the genocide in the official narrative in the perceived interests of unity. It is, politically and educationally, the only discourse permitted. Those who talk publicly of ethnicity, of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, face being accused of divisionism and genocide ideology and are liable to be arrested.³³

Education policy, in contrast to the stakeholder processes introduced into South Africa during the early transition period, was not contested. It is controlled by the government through the Ministry of Education and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in Kigali. The former and current Directors of the NCDC were in exile in Uganda.³⁴ The returning exiles brought back experiences of the Ugandan education system which informed policy, but the structures of the inherited Belgian and French systems are still largely in place.³⁵

Education, particularly history education, in Rwanda is widely considered to have contributed to conflict; however in post-conflict Rwanda, education is regarded as a major tool for reconciliation and the construction of an economically prosperous country. From the early education policy processes, the stated aims of education have included both reconciliation and education for poverty reduction and a prosperous economy. In 1995, a Conference on Policy and Planning of Education in Rwanda,

³³ Freedman, et. al (2008); Reyntens (2004) and numerous reports.

³⁴ Discussions with staff of the NCDC and personal contact with John Rutayisire, former Director and now Director of Examinations.

³⁵ Weinstein, H.M., Freedman, S.W. & Hughson, H. (2007) School voices: Challenges Facing Education Systems after Identity-based Conflicts. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, vol. 2 (1): 41-71: 66

released a Declaration stating that Rwanda would produce citizens ‘free of ethnic, regional and religious prejudice’ and that the role of education was to contribute to national reconciliation.³⁶ History education, however, particularly in the first ten years after the genocide ended, was not part of the national reconciliation plan. In the stated belief that the manipulation of history education resulted in genocide, the new government in 1994 placed a moratorium on the teaching of Rwandan history in the primary schools and made it optional in the secondary schools.³⁷ This put the memory debate on hold within education, opening the way for the dominance of the new master narrative in the public domain.

Memory and education policy

If memory within history education was considered too dangerous in post-conflict Rwanda, then memory of the past, both the romanticised pre-colonial past with its ‘Rwandan values’ and the traumatic knowledge of the genocide are considered appropriate frames of reference for education policy. A major policy document which provides a context for education policy, 2020 Vision, opens with an emotionally-charged, phoenix-like image of rebirth, bringing together the politics of memory and emotion:³⁸

Rwanda recovers from an era of events ripe with hardships in its history like the parcelling of its territory, colonization, the exclusion of a part of its population, postcolonial destructive choices, etc. which culminated in an abject genocide. Rwanda is rising from its ashes, healing its wounds and rifts, thinks of its future and formulates its aspirations...National reconciliation constitutes a fundamental challenge for Rwanda. The reconciliation and the reconstruction of the

³⁶ MINEPRISEC/MINESUPRES (1995) quoted in Obura, A (2003): 93

³⁷ IRDP (2006) *History and Conflicts in Rwanda*. Kigali: IRDP: 196

³⁸ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (2002) *2020 Vision*. Stated in *Vision 2020* and also highlighted in the Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2003) *National Curriculum Development Centre 6 Year Plan: 2003 to 2008 (Current Year Plus 5 Years)*. Kigali: NCDC; also in MINEDUC (2002) *Education Sector Policy*

nation in relation to internal divisions that have marked our history during the last decades are a necessity.³⁹

The values included in the document which identify the new society, are the ‘positive values of the Rwandan culture...strongly disturbed’ during the last century which need to be re-emphasized to instil ‘into citizens values that society considers positive’ and are:

...courage, humanism, patriotism, dynamism, dignity, integrity (*kwanga umugayo*), sense of honour and solidarity, self-abnegation, denial of selfish and partisan interests (*kudashyira inda imbere*, etc.).⁴⁰

The location of national values in the pre-colonial past is considered critical for attempting to build present-day unity that pre-dates the breakdown of social relations and genocide. It can be claimed that these values belonged to all Rwandans at a time of unity, before colonisation divided the ‘nation’. Vision 2020 also includes elements of the new master narrative, giving it legitimacy by being embedded within an official policy document. These are: the pre-colonial ‘nation’ that existed from the 11th century, the unity of all Rwandans before colonisation; the creation of ethnicity by colonial administrators; the ideology of division that distorted Rwandan values and caused genocide.⁴¹

While acknowledging the importance of particular values for the ‘reborn’ Rwanda, the major focus of education policy remains the identity of Rwandans within a prosperous modern economy. Through poverty reduction and economic stability it is hoped that the citizenship goals and national reconciliation will be achieved. This is a future-orientated identity that attempts to put the past behind it. According to the Director of the National Curriculum Development Centre in 2004:

Education is seen as major instrument of national development in pursuit of national goals. Education can provide the *human capital*

³⁹ 2020 Vision (2002): Introduction

⁴⁰ Ibid: 50

⁴¹ Ibid: 20

necessary for poverty reduction, making available the only kind of negotiable capital to which the majority of the population will have access. It can be the single most powerful instrument to combat prejudice, to foster common citizenship and to achieve national reconciliation.⁴²

Vision 2020 also emphasises the importance of skills and knowledge for a ‘modern and prosperous nation’ with a ‘prosperous knowledge-based economy’, literacy and basic education for all, gender equity, science and, technology, professional and managerial training’.⁴³

The economic focus is again outlined in the Education Sector Policy of 2002 which states that education and training is considered to be a critical ‘lynchpin’ in achieving development and poverty reduction in Rwanda, with the aims of giving Rwandans skills and values to be good citizens and of improving the quality of human life.⁴⁴ Particular attention is to be given to the teaching of science and technology, promoting girls’ education, adult functional literacy and the establishment of career guidance.⁴⁵ The ‘priority values’ for lower secondary education were identified as ‘employability, ICT and Science, Vocational and Technical Skills and rural development.’⁴⁶ History is mentioned in the document, but its value is considered only in relation to the economy with the ‘priority values’ to be gained through history listed as ‘rural development, vocational skills and social integration’. However, there is a concession to something more to be gained from engaging with the past: included among the ‘priority life skills’ to be gained from studying the past are peace and

⁴² Rutayisire, J. (2004) *Education for social and political reconstruction – the Rwandan experience from 1994-2004*. Paper presented at the BAICE Conference, University of Sussex, September 2004. My emphasis.

⁴³ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning,(2002) 2020 Vision (Draft 3, English Version): 7

⁴⁴ MINEDUC (2002) *Education Sector Policy*. Kigali: MINEDUC: Introduction

⁴⁵ *Education Sector Policy* (2002): Introduction

⁴⁶ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2003) *National Curriculum Development Centre 6 Year Plan: 2003 to 2008 (Current Year Plus 5 Years)*. Kigali: NCDC: 13, 14

reconciliation.⁴⁷ By that time, however, a moratorium had been placed on the teaching of Rwandan history in schools.

This strong focus on economic growth and skills to support growth is critical for countries in the developing world, particularly with shattered economies. However, for post-conflict societies with a deeply traumatic past, they serve another purpose. Education policies, which are economically oriented, are emotionally safer options for attempting to build national unity which can look to the future without having to engage with the past. It is significant, however, that although in 1994 a moratorium was placed on the teaching of Rwandan history there has never been a suggestion, as happened in South Africa in 1996, that national history should not be included in a revised curriculum. Rwandans themselves, suggest that for them, the past is constantly present.⁴⁸

While a moratorium was placed on the teaching of the history of Rwanda in formal primary education, history education in Rwanda continued in a variety of public spaces: government websites, political speeches, the media, the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission through their *ingando* ‘re-education’ camps, *gacaca* courts, public commemorations of the genocide, and at genocide memorial sites. Central to all of these sites and practices of memory, is a new master narrative that has taken the place of the conflict narrative. It is being disseminated as the authoritative version of Rwanda’s past and is driving Hutu memory and identity into the realms of subjugated knowledges and counter-memory.

Curriculum Revision: History education and re-imagining the nation

In line with most post-conflict states, Rwanda engaged in a process to modify the pre-1994 syllabuses with the aim of ‘correcting the errors of the past’ and training ‘people free of ethnic, regional, national and religious prejudices, conscious of human

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Rusisabagina (2006) notes that Rwandans are obsessed with the past: 14

rights and responsibilities’.⁴⁹ There was an emergency revision of all primary subjects in 1997 and lower secondary subjects in 1998 and advanced level in 1999. This was regarded as an essential first step in the urgent process of getting the education system working again after the genocide.⁵⁰ The secondary schools’ history syllabus was included in the revision. The aims of the revised history curriculum are aligned to the broad aims of the new education policies: after the first three years of history education in the secondary school, pupils should not only be prepared enough to avoid any form of ‘divisionism, regionalism, ethnicism and any other forms of discrimination’ but also ‘promote a culture of peace and democracy free from any forms of violence’. Moreover, they should be ‘historically educated and be able to discern the truth from lies...’⁵¹ Although the content revisions seem at a superficial level to be insignificant, the changes and the language of the curriculum reveal a move towards the new official narrative constructed from the Tutsi/RPF perspective.⁵² The table below compares the pre-1994 curriculum with the revisions. The new sections are in italics:⁵³

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education (1994) quoted in Obura (2003): 66 Also: Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2003) *National Curriculum Development Centre 6 Year Plan: 2003 to 2008 (Current Year Plus 5 Years)*. Kigali:NCDC:5

⁵⁰ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2003) *National Curriculum Development Centre 6 Year Plan: 2003 to 2008 (Current Year Plus 5 Years)*. Kigali: NCDC:5

⁵¹ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Centre (1998) *Ordinary Level History Programme*

⁵² MINEDUC *Ordinary level history programme* (1998) and *History Programme for Advanced Level* (1999): Examples include describing the 1990-1994 war as a ‘liberation war’ and the causes provided for the war (hardening of dictatorship and crushing opposition) suggest that the war was forced on the RPF. There is silence concerning the RPF motives for invading Rwanda in 1990 which some historians suggest had more to do with regional instability and the precarious position of the RPF in Uganda than a desire to free the people of Rwanda from oppression. When studying the Arusha Accords teachers are required to ‘expose’ the attitudes of the partisans for the pupils. See the table in the addendum for an overview of the pre-1994 curriculum and the changes made.

⁵³ The table is adapted from Gasanabo, J-D (2004) *Mémoires et Histoire Scolaire: Le Cas du Rwanda de 1962 à 1994*, Thèse No. 341, Présentée à la Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l’éducation de l’Université de Genève pour obtenir le grade de Docteur les sciences de l’éducation. Also: Ordinary level history programme (1998) and History Programme for Advanced Level (1999)

THEMES	Before 1994	After 1994 (Tronc Commun) *	After 1994 (Senior Second.)
Theme 1: Origin of the population			
Sources of history (oral, written, archaeological)	X	X	-
The peopling of Rwanda	X	X	-
Themes 2 & 3: Ubwoko & Ubhake			
Definition of the terms clan, lineage, ethnicity, tribe	X		
<i>Definition of the terms clan and lineage (without talking of ethnicity and tribe). Socio-cultural organisation (family, lineage, clan, social relations e.g. marriage and solidarity...)</i>		X	
Ubhake	X		X
Economic life before colonisation	X	X	-
Themes 4 & 5: Evangelisation and Colonisation (Belgium)			
Socio-political situation from the time of the first contact with Europeans	X		X
Social progress (education, health)	X		X
Economic life during colonisation (famines, etc)	X		X
Colonial Rwanda: German colonisation (definition, causes, conquest, resistance...); Belgian colonisation.	X	X	
First World War and Rwanda	X		X
1952 decree, elections of 1953 and 1956	X		X
Visit of the mandates commission of the UNO	X		X
Forced labour (akazi) and taxes (imisoro)	-		X
Theme 6: The Period 1959-1962			
Social context before 1959	X		X
Political parties (Aprosoma, Parmehutu, Rader, Unar)	X		X
Communal elections in 1960, Referendum and parliamentary elections of 1961	X		X
Revolution of 1959; Hutu Manifesto, victory of Parmehutu	X		-
<i>Context of decolonisation</i>	-		X
<i>Socio-political troubles of 1959</i>	-		X
<i>Illegal deposition of leaders, the Tutsi and Hutu partisans of UNAR</i>			X
<i>Period 1959-1962: one does not talk of revolution but political violence</i>		X	

Theme 7: Independent Rwanda			
The First Republic (defence of territorial integrity, satisfying the demands of the masses)	X		-
First Republic (economic problems)	X		X
<i>First Republic (refugee problem, elimination of internal opposition)</i>	-		X
<i>First Republic: Parmehutu, single party, ideological and regional dissension within Parmehutu, purges within Parmehutu, bloody repression (Gikongoro, Bugesera)</i>	-		X
<i>First Republic: regionalism and blocking of democratic institutions</i>	-	X	-
Second Republic (problems encountered and solutions supplied)	X		-
<i>Second Republic (dictatorship and political exclusion)</i>			X
Second Republic (coup d'état of 1973)	X		X
<i>Second Republic (military dictatorship, single party, regionalism and political exclusion, crisis of national unity)</i>		X	
<i>First and Second Republics: infrastructure (electricity, roads, water, telephone, etc.)</i>		X	
<i>War (1990 – 1994): causes, stages, Arusha Accords, death of Habyarimana, genocide and massacres, consequences of the war, government of national unity.</i>			X
Post-genocide period			
<i>Genocide, government of national unity, social evolution (housing, health, education)</i>		X	

* Tronc Commun is lower secondary school.

While the senior schools have the option of teaching this curriculum, the lack of new teaching resources and many teachers preferring not to engage with the traumatic past, the curriculum, has for the most part, remained a dead letter. This is exacerbated by the fact that no new textbooks or other supporting resources have been produced to support a new approach to history.⁵⁴

In 2004 the moratorium on the teaching of Rwandan history was lifted to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the ending of the genocide.⁵⁵ Later that year the challenge facing the development of a new curriculum was said to be the need 'to first

⁵⁴ A number of references to the lack of resources have been cited further on in the chapter.

⁵⁵ In response to the ending of the moratorium, the University of California, Berkeley and a non-profit organisation, *Facing History and Ourselves*, Boston, facilitated the creation of a history resource manual on Rwandan history and organised workshops for teachers to introduce democratic teaching methods. While the teachers have responded enthusiastically to the new teaching methods, the Rwandan government has not responded as enthusiastically, declaring that Rwandans will write their own history. This even though the writing teams facilitated by UCB were Rwandans. I was able to participate in one of the week-long workshops run by FHAO in July 2006.

reach a consensus on how to interpret the events before and after the 1994 genocide and to determine how to look forward to the future'.⁵⁶ Or as another source put it, history education would be reintroduced once Rwandan historians have 'scientifically' reviewed the 'depiction of the history of Rwanda' and the 'true' history has been written.⁵⁷ Since 2004 there have been a number of official announcements that teaching of Rwandan history would be reintroduced and in April 2006, the *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2010* noted that education at all levels is an important means of addressing issues of peace and reconciliation; and that the values of peace, harmony and reconciliation would infuse a revision of history and civic education by the National Curriculum Development Centre.⁵⁸ History education and its related problems continue to occupy policy makers, and the desire to establish the 'true' history of Rwanda is an often re-iterated goal in policy documents.⁵⁹ What is intriguing about these comments is that although there is, in effect, a new master narrative that claims to be the true history of Rwanda, it has not yet been introduced into history education. The master narrative has hegemonic status everywhere but in the school history curriculum

For a change in the way history is taught and to support a different interpretation, it is not enough to have a curriculum document in place that contains little more than a list of topics. It is critical to have appropriate teaching materials and teacher training. None of the latter has been put in place by the government or ministry of education.

Prior to 2004, aspects of Rwandan history which were closely aligned to the ideology of the RPF narrative were introduced into a civic education curriculum for primary schools and a political education curriculum for secondary schools that was released

⁵⁶ Rutayisire (2004): 11

⁵⁷ Obura (2003): 100

⁵⁸ Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Education (2006) *Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2010* (MINEDUC, Kigali):19

⁵⁹ For example, IRDP (2006): 198; Office of the President (August 1999), *Report on the reflection meetings held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999*. Kigali:Office of the President

in 2003.⁶⁰ Civic education was considered to be a means of informing and empowering citizens to enable them to solve social, economic or political problems affecting them in the country.⁶¹ Among the objectives for the lower secondary school (*tronc commun*) are understanding the political history of Rwanda, the necessity of safeguarding national independence and contributing to the preservation of the positive values of Rwandan culture.⁶² In the upper secondary school pupils are expected to develop a patriotic spirit and contribute to the construction of national unity.⁶³ The content topics include unity and patriotism in pre-colonial Rwandan society, political divisionism and ethnic discrimination in the colonial period, the ending of the genocide and the liberation of the Rwandan people in 1994, and the programme of good governance, unity and reconciliation of the government of national unity.⁶⁴

While the new civic and political education curriculum encourages group discussion, the formulation of the history topics to be discussed makes it clear to teachers what the ideological slant needs to be, steering teachers and pupils firmly into a circumscribed version of the past that reflects the Rwandan Patriotic Front political discourse, attempting to shape memory and identity within a new reality. For example, among the specific objectives in the second year of lower secondary, pupils have to ‘justify the role of unity and patriotism in safeguarding national sovereignty’; in the second cycle, a suggested teaching activity is to ‘discuss in small groups, the role of each of the positive values of Rwandan culture in reinforcing humane values’.⁶⁵ There is no question of engaging in debate about, for example, possible interpretations of patriotism or whether or not the Rwandan values were all positive or

⁶⁰ Republique Rwandaise, Ministere de l’education, de la Science, de la Technologie et de la Recherche Scientifique (2003) *Programme d’education politique: tronc commun et second cycle*. Kigali:Centre National de Développement des Programmes

⁶¹ Rutayisire (2004): 9

⁶² Republique Rwandaise, Ministere de l’education, de la Science, de la Technologie et de la Recherche Scientifique (2003) *Programme d’education politique: tronc commun et second cycle*. Kigali:Centre National de Développement des Programmes: 2

⁶³ Ibid: 14

⁶⁴ Ibid: passim

⁶⁵ Republique Rwandaise: Ministere de l’Education, de la Science, de la Technologie et de la Recherche Scientifique (2003) *Programme d’Education Politique: Tronc Commun et Second Cycle* Kigali: NCDC: 8; 23

could be contested. Significantly, other than accompanying teachers' manuals, there were no new teaching resources at the time of the release of the civics curriculum.⁶⁶

A new history curriculum has just been completed, but will not be released until the teachers' manual is ready.⁶⁷ In the introduction there is still an emphasis on Rwandan values, a Rwandese spirit of patriotism and the love of work.⁶⁸ Among the general objectives are to 'work with a critical spirit'; to live in a world without ethnic, religious distinction or other forms of discrimination and of exclusion that led to genocide of Tutsi in 1994; and to promote the culture of peace, tolerance and of reconciliation and the love of the homeland.⁶⁹ While there are similarities with the 1998 curriculum, there is an increased emphasis on the clans, lineages and chiefdoms of pre-colonial Rwanda and organisation of traditional Rwandan society. Colonial Rwanda is examined in some detail, as is the build up to genocide. What is significant, however, is that unlike the civics and political education curricula, there is an attempt to use neutral language in describing the topics and the suggested teaching and learning activities are more interactive than in previous versions of the history curriculum, and less directed. For example, in the section on the 'Genocide of the Tutsi', which is clear Rwandan Patriotic Front ideology, the second bullet includes 'Hutu opposition to the genocide ideology'. In the previous curriculum the genocide appeared merely as 'Genocide and Massacres' with no mention of Hutu resisters.⁷⁰ In suggested methodology in the 2008 curriculum pupils are asked to 'mention their clans and what they know about them'; and based on their responses the teacher is asked to explain different clans, lineage and nation.⁷¹

However, as already pointed out, it is not what is in the curriculum itself that is the issue, rather the textbooks and other teaching materials developed for classroom use. The teachers' manual has still to be developed, and at the moment of writing, there

⁶⁶ Communication with staff at the National Curriculum Development Centre, Kigali.

⁶⁷ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education (2008) *History Programme for Ordinary Level*. Kigali: National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)

⁶⁸ Ibid: 2

⁶⁹ Ibid: 3

⁷⁰ History Programme 2008: 49; History Programme Advanced Level 1999: 55

⁷¹ History Programme 2008: 8

are no new textbooks. While there appears to be a real lack of political will to put history education firmly back into the formal education system, a contributing factor could be a sense of fear of losing control over the master narrative.

Disseminating the official narrative

While history education in schools was being debated, the official narrative was in the process of being aggressively disseminated. There is evidence that the contents of the narrative are widely known among adults⁷² and youth. The extent to which the official version of the past has apparently been internalised by young people became evident in 2004. Less than a year after the publication of the civics curriculum, the results of a National History Essay Writing Competition for secondary school pupils and university students that had been organised by *Never Again International* in Rwanda, came in. The competition drew over 3 000 entries from secondary and tertiary students from all over the country. The title of the essay was: ‘Based on the history of Rwanda what can we the youth do so that genocide should never happen again?’ The organisers reported that every single essay was similarly structured and the historical accounts were identical. Every essay entered was divided into three periods: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. They all wrote of the pre-colonial unity and patriotism, destroyed by colonialism and the good actions of the current government in attempting to restore Rwandan unity.⁷³

As the various curriculum documents do little more than list topics, and there are no new textbooks, the question is how the Rwandan youth became so familiar with the narrative. The most aggressive dissemination of the official narrative occurs at the ‘solidarity’ or *ingando* re-education camps run by the government-linked National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). Three departments have been set up within the NURC: the Department of Civic Education; the Department of Conflict

⁷² Longman, T. & Rutagengwa, T. (2004) Memory, identity and community in Rwanda. In Weinstein, et. al. (2004) *My Neighbor My Enemy* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 169

⁷³ Hodgkin, M. (n.d.) *Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education, History and the State* (Never Again, Kigali) at [http://neveragain.epov.org/Reconciliation in Rwanda:-Education%2C History and State](http://neveragain.epov.org/Reconciliation%20in%20Rwanda:-Education%20History%20and%20State) (Accessed 17 April 2007)

Resolution; and the Department of Community Initiative Support.⁷⁴ The Civic Education department of the NURC developed the solidarity or *ingando* camps ‘as a tool to build coexistence within communities’,⁷⁵ with one of its first functions being the social reintegration of ex-prisoners⁷⁶ and those released from prison, to educate youth and to provide military training.⁷⁷ The programme now includes school going youth and students at secondary and tertiary levels. By 2002 the training was extended to informal traders and other social groups including survivors, prisoners, community leaders, women and youth. The NURC also facilitates the setting up of NURC Clubs in schools and higher learning.⁷⁸

It would appear that the government is still hesitant to entrust the new narrative to teachers, fearing a resurgence of ethnic politics which will give rise to genocide ideology. What goes on in a classroom is notoriously difficult to control. This could also explain why the official version of Rwanda’s past is so aggressively disseminated at alternative sites of education which are controlled by government representatives. It is at the *ingando* camps and public memorial sites that the Ministry of Education and the Rwandan Patriotic Front can maintain complete control over the way in which the official narrative is presented. There is no need to rely on intermediaries, such as teachers, who may not be reliable transmitters of the official narrative. Currently, at each prison release, 1000 prisoners undergo *ingando*. In addition, approximately 3000 pre-University students undergo *ingando* each year.⁷⁹ The Ministry of Education regularly organizes camps in collaboration with the Unity and Reconciliation Commission for students with the aim of instilling ‘in students’ minds the

⁷⁴ Shyaka, A (n.d.): 34

⁷⁵ National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) (2007) *Ingando*, <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/> Accessed 4 February 2008

⁷⁶ PRI (Penal Reform International) (2004) *Research Report on the Gacaca Report VI: From camp to hill, the reintegration of released prisoners* (PRI, Paris and Kigali, with support from DfID)

⁷⁷ Tiemessen, A.E. (2004) After Arusha: Gacaca Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda, *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (Fall), <http://www/africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8ila4.htm> Accessed 3 December 2007: 57

⁷⁸ See the NURC website:

<http://www.nurc.gov.rw/index.php?view=article&id=50%3Aingando&tmpl=compone...>

⁷⁹ NURC (2007) *Ingando*, <http://www.nurc.gov.rw/> (Accessed 4 February 2008)

fundamental principles of tolerance and common responsibility towards the future of [the] country for the enlightenment of peace in Rwanda'.⁸⁰

In a report commissioned by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, the author noted that for the NURC to realise its aim of unity and reconciliation in Rwanda, it 'must not focus on the genocide context, but on all the causes of the Rwanda evil by considering the historical and ideological framework'.⁸¹ The Ministry of Education can be sure that those who deliver the NURC programmes will deliver the official narrative as the 'true' history of Rwanda. While social reintegration may be the stated aim, critics have suggested that with the planting of the seeds of reconciliation, *ingando* camps at the same time disseminate pro-RPF ideology through political indoctrination.⁸² Topics are covered under five central themes: analysis of Rwanda's problems; history of Rwanda; political and socioeconomic issues in Rwanda and Africa, rights, obligations and duties and leadership. The official version of the past forms the core of the *Ingando* course 'the history of Rwanda'.

Evidence from interviews with *Ingando* participants, indicates that this interpretation has, superficially at least, been widely accepted.⁸³ Re-education regarding ethnicity in Rwanda is at the heart of the *ingando* programme for students and pupils.⁸⁴ They learn about the Rwandan nation before colonialism, the damaging effects of colonialism, and the creation of 'myths of difference'.⁸⁵ One participant noted:

I went to solidarity [*ingando*] camps. We learned about the origins of the so-called ethnic groups: Hutu, Twa, Tutsi. We were told that these

⁸⁰ Official Address of Honourable Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2002) while on Official visit to United Kingdom on Education and Culture of Peace in Rwanda. <http://www.mineduc.gov.rw/minenglish.htm> (Accessed: 14 June 2006)

⁸¹ Shyaka, A. (n.d.): 35

⁸² Mgbako, C. (2005) *Ingando* Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 18: 201- 224; Human Rights Watch reported that the 'camps were meant to promote ideas of nationalism, to erase the ethnically charged lessons taught by the previous government, and to spur loyalty to the RPF (Human Rights Watch (2000) *Solidarity Camps*, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/rwanda/Rwan004-13.htm> (Accessed 8 February 2008)

⁸³ PRI (2004): p23ff; IRD (2006): p.199ff

⁸⁴ Mgbako (2005): 218

⁸⁵ Ibid

don't really have a historical background; they were brought by Europeans (colonists) in order to rule us. Instead we had the so-called [clan names]: Abasinga, Abanyiginya, Abasigaba...which are the real ethnic groups Rwandans have.⁸⁶

In terms of the genocide, the contents of the course are silent on the Hutu who resisted participating in the genocide and on those who rescued Tutsi from the killers.⁸⁷ The danger in continuing to emphasize the collective responsibility of the perpetrators in the genocide and failing to recognize individual choice and responsibility is the mistrust that this creates between Hutu and the government and will remain an obstacle to unity and reconciliation.⁸⁸

Searching for a true history

However, there are indications that although the new narrative is widely known, there are still significant differences in the way in which Hutu and Tutsi interpret the past. These interpretations are being constructed into opposing narratives of trauma.⁸⁹ This may not always be spoken about openly for fear of reprisals. Teaching about ethnic divisions in the past could be construed as divisionism and encouraging genocide ideology with teachers liable to be arrested.⁹⁰ There is evidence that teachers are fearful and many don't dare talk about difficult things except with people who have shared the same experience. They are afraid to break a fragile peace.⁹¹ There is also the perception that appearing to disagree with the government can be dangerous. During a teacher workshop facilitated by a Boston-based non-government

⁸⁶ Quoted in Freedman, et. al. (2004) *Confronting the past in Rwandan schools*, in Weinstein, et. al. (2004): 253

⁸⁷ Rescuers are profiled in African Rights (2002) *Tribute to Courage*. London: African Rights

⁸⁸ PRI (2004): 35

⁸⁹ See for example, Eltringham (2004) *Accounting for Horror*. London: Pluto Press who has included the two versions in his book.

⁹⁰ Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) has been involved in teacher workshops since 2004. Recently a professor of History from the National University at Butare warned her that some of the material she was using was dangerous and could be considered to be encouraging divisionism. Personal communication and Freedman, et al (2008) *Teaching History after Identity-Based Conflicts: The Rwanda Experience*, forthcoming *Comparative Education Review*, November 2008. There have also been reports that genocide ideology is becoming rampant in schools and the Minister of Education was called to account for this in parliament. Various *New Times* reports during February 2008. This has grave implications for teaching history for democracy.

⁹¹ African Rights (2001): 72 Extract from one of the interviews with the teachers.

organisation, *Facing History and Ourselves* (FHAO) at the National University in Butare in 2006, while all agreed that disagreeing with the government is a fundamental democratic principle, most teachers felt that they couldn't do it. One teacher summarised the general sentiment by saying that:

when you disagree with the government they can either take you as a rebel or a person who is against it and you are in prison – generally – one way or the other – imprisoned or loss of job.⁹²

And yet, in spite of the fear of disagreeing with the government, evidence suggests that the official Rwandan Patriotic Front narrative is not generally accepted without question as the consensus about the 'truth' of the Rwandan past. This also reveals cracks in the unity of Rwandan identity that official rhetoric is trying too hard to cement. Rwandans continue to express a deep desire to understand what went wrong in 1994 and generally believe that it is possible to have a 'scientifically researched true' (objective) history, that takes 'what from the past was good and proper and then [makes] a common agreement on our history'.⁹³ In examining this perception I will draw evidence from documents as well as the interactions of the teachers, teacher educators and curriculum officials during the Facing History and Ourselves workshop in Butare in 2006.

The view that history can be objective is particularly evident in the repeated intentions on the part of those who construct education policy to deliver the 'truth' about Rwanda's past. In a report on meetings convened by the Office of the President the group given the task of reflecting on the unity of Rwandans noted that there is a need to discuss the problems of the past and 'examine what happened in history in order to know the TRUTH and avoid to follow [sic] distorted history...'⁹⁴ The Education Sector Policy of September 2002 included the government's belief that education should aim to recreate in the youth 'the values which have been eroded in the course of the country's recent history' and insisted that 'future populations will learn the true

⁹² FHAO Butare workshop 2006

⁹³ Eltringham (2004): 149

⁹⁴ Office of the President (August 1999), *Report on the reflection meetings held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999*

history of Rwanda'⁹⁵ while the Primary and Secondary School Curriculum Development Policy in 2003, promises to provide 'an objective and truthful account of Rwandan...history'.⁹⁶

But the official truth does not appear to satisfy the deep desire of all Rwandans to know what really happened. The results of research carried out by a Kigali-based NGO in 2006 showed that teachers also want an 'objective', 'true' history based on thorough research which has the consensus of all Rwandans and is 'serene'. They want a history with no bias, that corrects the past, that discovers the 'true Rwandan civilization and the real Rwandan way of life', so that the youth can know the 'origin and causes of hatred between Rwandans'.⁹⁷ It is believed that knowing the 'truth' could bring an end to the tension, uncertainty and fears around reconciliation, and that an accurate record of the history of Rwanda will ensure that the truth is written without dividing the people more - truth with no sweeping biases.⁹⁸

Teachers express concern at teaching what cannot be established as fact. In the FHAO workshop, in spite of 93% of workshop participants strongly agreeing or agreeing in the workshop evaluations that history is open to interpretation, and 90% strongly agreeing or agreeing that disagreement about history is healthy, participants returned repeatedly to the question of the 'truth about the past'.⁹⁹ This ambivalence about the Rwandan past and wanting to know the truth emerged from the interactions during the workshop when they were encouraged by the Rwandan facilitators to teach about pre-colonial clans to encourage unity in Rwanda today. What follows is a transcript of the interaction between the Rwandan facilitators who were members of the History Department of the National University, one of whom was a senior historian¹⁰⁰ and the

⁹⁵ MINEDUC (2002) *Education Sector Policy*

⁹⁶ Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research (2003) *Primary and Secondary School Curriculum* (Kigali)

⁹⁷ IRDP (2006): 198

⁹⁸ National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) (n.d.) *Nation-wide Grassroots Consultations Report: Unity and Reconciliation Initiatives in Rwanda* (NURC, Kigali): 15

⁹⁹ Written evaluations of the workshop. I attended the workshop which was held in July 2006.

¹⁰⁰ One of the facilitators, Professor Deogratius Byanafashe, is Professor and Chair of the Department of History. Two other members of the History Department from the National University of Rwanda took part in the facilitation. They all delivered elements of the official narrative during the week that the workshop ran. All three are former exiles from the Congo. Prof Byanafashe was also the main

workshop participants who were mostly teachers. The teachers in the workshop were urged by the facilitators to teach the pre-colonial clans in their history classes as a way of encouraging solidarity and patriotism in the present. While the participants were not averse to teaching about clans they were uneasy about teaching something that was not based on ‘facts’. These transcripts were compiled from conversations over a number of days as participants returned repeatedly to the question of the truth about clans and the origins of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa.:

Facilitator A: Identity – Hutu, Tutsi, Twa – now first Munyarwanda. Hutu, Tutsi, Twa existed in history, but what about ancient times? In ancient times there was no Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, but clans. You could all belong to the same clan – you didn’t know you were Hutu/Tutsi; you were part of a clan. The Belgians are responsible for ethnicity... This was used for division – now, we are one family and country in districts.¹⁰¹

The Rwandan facilitators constantly returned to the theme of unity through the clan. Teaching pre-colonial history and the value of solidarity within a clan system, it is

writer and co-ordinator of the history materials project facilitated by the University of California Berkeley. These materials though they attempt to provide alternative points of view, show unmistakable elements of the official narrative. The resource manual also has the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial divisions and many of the sources in the pre-colonial section draw on Kagame and Maquet: The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Scientific Research & National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) (2006) *The Teaching of History of Rwanda: a Participatory Approach* (© The Regents of the University of California). A single academic can have considerable influence in Rwanda. Professor Byanafashe, a senior historian, is for example, also Dean of Humanities and a key member of *Light and Society*, a religious association that publishes pamphlets on a number of topics in support of the RPF. In one of the 1996 publications for example, *Light and Society: Review Rwanda*, the various articles repeated aspects of the official narrative: ethnic ideology that was manipulated by colonial powers split the Rwandese Nation making it lose national unity; ‘divisive ideology’ resulted in the genocide of Tutsi and massacre of Hutu who opposed the genocide; and the RPF ended the genocide and made possible the setting up of the government of national unity. The big question was asked: Who will deliver Rwanda from the division ideology?’ The answer was, of course, the RPF: ‘RPF has **never** believed in the hatred between Hutu and Tutsi. It has **never** taken any ethnic group as its opponent’

¹⁰¹ A professional development workshop facilitated by *Facing History and Ourselves*, an NGO in Boston, which I attended. Author’s transcript of the recorded session. There were two facilitators who were francophone, having grown up in exile in the Congo. It has been pointed out that the essence of what was being conveyed was lost in the translation. ‘What about kinship? The version of Facilitator A that I know, is that in ancient Rwanda, when a Hutu, Tutsi or Twa was asked: *Uli umucyi?* (What are you?) The answer was, e.g. *Umutsobe* (Tsobe which is a name of a clan) rather than I am a Hutu/Tutsi/Twa): Mironko, comments on the thesis. In fact, this is what the facilitator was trying to convey.

hoped, will give substance to the official political rhetoric of the unity of all Rwandans. The second facilitator emphasised the within the clans, obligations ‘were wider and higher than ethnicity’.¹⁰² However, the belief that history can be objective, and the search for the ‘truth’ about Rwanda’s past, makes it difficult for teachers to engage with the uncertainties about the history of clans with their pupils. This issue was raised by one of the teachers:

Thinking about yesterday, the main thing was that I was interested in the teaching of clans. I realised deeper [sic] that it was the central focus of the Rwandese before colonisation...But I have a worry. It is not very clear whether we could start teaching about clans when the actual origin of clans is still a myth...Should we tell students that we don’t know the origins of the clans when we are saying at the same time that they have some of the aspects that can contribute to solidarity?¹⁰³

The official hope is that in accepting the narrative of national unity, Rwandans will be encouraged to abandon the ethnic categories invented by the Belgians. Instead in learning about, and identifying with, the pre-colonial harmony, pride in their ethnic identity will be replaced with pride in the newly constructed national identity.¹⁰⁴ However, without the narrative, together with suitable supporting teaching materials being included in formal education, evidence suggests that this is not happening. Furthermore, teachers and pupils bring personal, family and community ‘knowledge’ into the classroom.

Many older teachers were teachers before the genocide. Teacher knowledge in this case is knowledge of the conflict narrative and personal experience of the conflict. Without extensive teacher workshops to engage with the personal legacy of the conflict, individual support or new teaching resources, it is very likely that teachers will continue to teach what they have taught in the past. This has been the evidence

¹⁰² A professional development workshop facilitated by *Facing History and Ourselves*, an NGO in Boston, which I attended. Author’s transcript of the recorded session.

¹⁰³ Author’s transcript of the recorded workshop sessions.

¹⁰⁴ See Longman, T. & Rutagengwa, T. (2004) Memory, identity and community in Rwanda. In Weinstein, et. al. (2004): 162-182

that has emerged from research in South Africa. Furthermore, there is also evidence that Rwandan teachers are drawing on the vernacular memories of the communities as well as their own memories when teaching about the genocide. This was highlighted by a conversation with a group of teacher educators in Butare. They were asked what history they taught to their students, and what materials they used for the history classes. The reply was that they used ‘some’ old books to compile notes, and that they and their students ‘go and ask...older people who were living during such a period of history [the genocide].’¹⁰⁵ As the conversation suggested, without teaching resources vernacular histories, located in the divisive past, are informing history education.

Evidence from research has also shown that the questions raised by pupils in classes indicate that ethnicity is still an issue in the way pupils respond to the past. Teachers have reported that when teaching Rwandan history, pupils ‘react according to their ethnic belonging’ with Hutu pupils asking questions about why the monarchy was Tutsi, while Tutsis are more interested in why the king went into exile in 1959.¹⁰⁶ Clearly this is not what the RPF leadership would want, but in not dealing decisively with history education, including the provision of new resources, vernacular history and the pre-genocide official conflict narratives are likely to continue in schools for some time.

The resurgence of ‘genocide ideology’ in schools is indicative of the intergenerational transmission of knowledge within vernacular communities which is also evident in post-apartheid South Africa. In a number of reported incidents in senior schools across Rwanda, Tutsi pupils who survived the genocide were being targeted by Hutu pupils. One report noted that most of the pupils in the schools were too young to remember or understand the genocide and were therefore learning to hate from their parents.¹⁰⁷ In an attempt to combat the perceived upsurge of genocide ideology in 2008, all teachers in primary and secondary schools were sent to ‘solidarity camps’

¹⁰⁵ Teacher workshop run by *Facing History and Ourselves*, an NGO in Boston, which I attended.

¹⁰⁶ IDRP (2006):197; African Rights (2001): 23-24

¹⁰⁷ BBC News (2008) *Genocide hatred lingers in Rwanda schools*, 29 February 2008, <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7246985> Accessed 10 July 2008

where the ‘fight against the ideology’ is in the programme.¹⁰⁸ The new official narrative is central to the *ingando* solidarity camp curriculum.

This search for the truth also has implications for pedagogical content knowledge when developing a post-conflict curriculum. Believing in scientific facts in history which have been ‘established’ and embedded in a dominant narrative will mean approaches in history education that are located in historical inquiry will be discouraged. This is problematic, as it is not only what is taught, but perhaps more importantly, how it is taught that will encourage a critical engagement with the past. Believing history to be factual and not appreciating the political and ideological nature of history is a barrier to reconciliation. As Mamdani has argued, it is not possible to think of reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda without a prior reconciliation with history,¹⁰⁹ but this implies understanding the nature of the construction of narratives of the past, of the political nature of collective memory and being able to ‘think each other’s history’.¹¹⁰ While South Africa, in the latest curriculum revision, was able to develop a history curriculum that opened the way for border crossings and disciplinary conversations, there is no evidence of this possibility in Rwanda yet. Perhaps the South African ‘miracle’ has been the ability to enter into dialogue across historical and racial divides.

Public history education and the claiming of ideological space

The narrative of the Tutsi genocide is powerfully and emotionally reinforced in memorials and public commemorations in Rwanda, particularly during the official week of mourning in April. Ironically, the forced commemorations during July, and the raw evidence of the genocide in the various genocide memorials in the country, work against the official narrative that aims to foster a sense of unity among

¹⁰⁸ Hirondele News Agency (2008) *Rwanda/Genocide – Law reprimanding genocide ideology to be taught in Rwandan schools*, 10 April 2008

http://www.hirondellenews.com/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18 Accessed 10 July 2008; Also at: http://www.rwandagateway.org/article.php3?id_article=8683

¹⁰⁹ Mamdani, M. (2001) *When victims become Killers* (Princeton University Press): 267 This was also the opinion of the consultant, Shyaka in a report for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, Shyaka, A. (n.d.) *The Rwandan conflict: Origin, Development, Exit Strategies*, A study ordered by The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission: 37

¹¹⁰ This was a phrase used by Edward Said in a presentation at the Saamtrek Values in Education Conference convened by the Minister of Education in Cape Town, South Africa in 2001.

Rwandans. Instead, it causes resentment among Hutu, some of whom express anger and frustration over the one-sided nature of commemoration that focuses on the suffering of the Tutsi while ignoring the suffering of the Hutu.¹¹¹ This is exacerbated by the refusal of authorities to allow Hutu to bring human rights abuses carried out by the invading RPF army in 1994 to the *gacaca* courts.¹¹²

In Rwanda, memorials and commemorations have become highly emotional forms of propaganda for the RPF version of the past.¹¹³ The official week of mourning brings together the politics of memory, identity and emotion, forcing a particular kind of remembrance and in Boler's and Foucault's terms, attempts to shape the subject. This closes down debate about the past and brings enormous tension as all Rwandans are expected to participate in one of the public spaces of mourning. These are events which fail to recognise Hutu survivors and which perpetrators are beginning to regard with antagonism that is sometimes expressed with the murder of Tutsi survivors. Heroes day, accompanied by full page spreads and colour supplements to the newspapers, have only just begun to acknowledge a few Hutu rescuers. Liberation day is celebrated with full page congratulatory spreads to the RPF from a range of businesses and professional organisations.¹¹⁴

Fourteen years after the genocide, the genocide master narrative as expressed by the RPF is potentially psychologically explosive. The official refusal to acknowledge that there were Hutu survivors of the genocide or that the RPF committed human rights

¹¹¹ Longman & Rutagengwa (2004): 175

¹¹² These are the local community gatherings 'on the grass' based on Rwandan tradition, where the lesser crimes committed during the genocide can be heard by the community and dealt with in a more traditional way than formal criminal courts. They are intended to facilitate the process of community healing.

¹¹³ For example, the official memorial to the genocide in Kigali was not even conceptualised within Rwanda and, it has been suggested, was built more for international consumption than a peoples' memorial. The Kigali Memorial situated in the suburb of Gisozi was designed by Aegis Trust, a UK-based NGO that is linked to Beth Shalom, the UK Holocaust Memorial Centre. Beth Shalom was conceptualised and built through the energies of the Smith family, who also advised the Cape Town Holocaust Centre on its interpretation when it was built. I have been closely involved with the CT Holocaust Centre since its inception and have also visited Beth Shalom. When I walked into Gisozi, I could have been walking into either Beth Shalom or the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in terms of the displays. The gardens surrounding Gisozi reminded me of an English stately home garden and I kept asking myself: Where is Rwanda? Where is Africa?

¹¹⁴ I collected a number of *New Times* newspaper supplements featuring these events in Rwanda in 2006.

abuses and the insistence that the international community and Rwandan society recognise that what happened in 1994 was a Tutsi genocide together with the insistence on collective Hutu guilt, all incorporated in the narrative, feeds resentment among Rwandan Hutu including teachers who would have to teach the new version of history. In a 1999 Report on the reflection meetings convened by the office of the then President Bizimungu, it was stated that ‘the genocide and massacres are a collective offence. No family, no village in Rwanda was not affected’.¹¹⁵ By characterising all Hutu in Rwanda who lived through the genocide within the country as perpetrators and denying the possibility of Hutu ‘survivors’,¹¹⁶ the narrative leaves little room for reconciliation, either with history or in the present. What it does is to push Hutu narratives into the shadows to become vernacular narratives of subjugated knowledge that will at some point resurface to challenge the official narrative.

Conclusion

A danger in a post-conflict society is that those who have engaged in extreme and premeditated violence may need to maintain psychological distance from their own behaviour to avoid being overwhelmed by guilt and horror. In order to protect themselves from the emotional consequences of their own actions, perpetrators often continue to blame victims, and to hold on to the ideology that motivated and justified their violence.¹¹⁷ Part of the process of ‘moving on’, is acknowledging the trauma of the past in a way that prevents denial and opens the way to the mourning process. But what is resented by many Hutu, quite apart from the pressure to accept collective guilt, is the fact that the RPF deny the human rights abuses that they committed during the war and refuse to allow these to be brought before *gacaca* courts.

Evidence suggests that suppressing ethnicity as a route to national reconciliation is not having the desired effect. Hutu-Tutsi distinctions seem still to be deeply internalised,

¹¹⁵ Office of the President (1999): 6. Although the President also talked of individual or ‘culprit’s offence’ so that it would not be enough to punish such a crime at a high level. Also Thiemessen (2004)

¹¹⁶ Mamdani (2001) There is official acknowledgement that Hutu were victims during the genocide (but not of the RPF killings), but that there are no survivors as anyone who resisted must have been killed. This means Hutu who did survive are regarded as genocidaires or collaborators. As noted previously, Straus’ research has effectively demolished evidence on which collective guilt is based. Straus (2006)

¹¹⁷ Staub, et al (2005): 303

indicated by the continued acceptance by interviewees for a report compiled by the Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) based in Kigali, that one could recognise a Tutsi by physical features alone.¹¹⁸ Instead of teaching acceptance of diversity, this approach appears to be driving ethnicity underground, creating a potentially dangerous situation for the construction of a chosen trauma that will inevitably resurface – as the current ‘genocide ideology’ that is said to have surfaced in schools could well be demonstrating.

There is deep anxiety in Rwanda at the moment about ‘genocide ideology’ in schools with up to 50 school principals and teachers being suspended on suspicion of disseminating the ‘ideology of genocide’.¹¹⁹ The reports do not mention specific subjects in relation to the incidents, but a parliamentary committee set up in December 2007 to investigate the apparent rapid increase of this phenomenon in schools, condemned the ‘infamous writings and books’ in school libraries which contained speeches of former president, Habyarimana. When the Education Minister said that the Ministry had trained teachers how to use these writings appropriately, one parliamentarian is reported to have said that ‘one cannot give poison to his child’ and that teaching the Habyarimana speeches meant that the ‘ministers had learnt nothing from the Genocide’.¹²⁰

While the reported increase in what is perceived to be genocide ideology is alarming, these reports raise important issues about the nature of history education as well as

¹¹⁸ Zorbas, E. (2004) Reconciliation in Post-genocide Rwanda, *African Journal of Legal Studies* Vol.1, No. 1: 42 quoting the IRDP report, ‘Reconstruire une paix durable au Rwanda’ compiled in 2003.

¹¹⁹ News 24 (2008) ‘Genocide’ teachers suspended
http://www.new24.com/News24v2/Components/Generic/News24v2_Print-PopUp Accessed 28 January 2008

¹²⁰ Suuna, I. and Buyinza, J. (2008) Education Ministers answer unsatisfactorily – MPs, *The Sunday Times* 20 January, (Kigali) <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/index.php?issue=13415&article=767> (Accessed 22 January 2008). A principal of a school and a number of teachers were dismissed as a result of the investigation. I am not saying that they were innocent of sowing the seeds of hatred that characterised the pre-genocide period, but suggesting that if a history teacher engaged pupils with documents from the Habyarimana period in the course of working with historical interpretation it could be misconstrued as teaching genocide ideology. The most recent South African curriculum encourages pupils to engage with various interpretations of the past, though within a moral and ethical framework provided by the South African Constitution. This could include engaging with the racist attitudes embedded in old school textbooks of the apartheid past to deconstruct the ‘false ideologies’ that justified an unjust system.

about the intersections of power and ideology in the attempts to control the shaping of a traumatic past in service of the present political needs. In pedagogical terms it begs the question whether critical debate would be permitted in practice in history classrooms, particularly if engaging with different interpretations of the past is construed as genocide ideology. It would be a brave teacher who persisted in trying new approaches. It also highlights the power of emotional discourses when the genocide is used to justify political action.

Some insight into the extent of the fear of renewed violence or genocide was revealed by the impassioned response of Rwanda's Presidential Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Richard Sezibera, to an article by a South African peace facilitator, Jan van Eck, published in *The Times*. Van Eck argued that unless Rwanda 'allows freedom of political and ethnic expression' the 'ethnic cancer' will result in further conflict.¹²¹ Sezibera's retort in the Kigali-based newspaper, *The New Times*, was that the problem of the Great Lakes Region is not ethnicity, but the 'activities of post Colonial elites, steeped in unquestioning acceptance of the colonial tactics of divide and rule', and that Rwandans place emphasis on what unites and not what divides them:

ethnicising politics is just one step away from the acceptance of Bantustans, Xhosastans, Zulustans, Tutsistans, Hutustans and other unacceptable stans as the basis of political communities...[Rwanda] totally rejects the prescription of ethnicity to cure an 'ethnic cancer'...

The legacy of the genocide cannot be ignored in research on history education in Rwanda, and yet studies do not take this into account.¹²³ Psychologists warn of the dangers of an unprocessed past of collective trauma which could lead to ongoing cycles of violence.¹²⁴ However, critical questions need to be raised about the readiness

¹²¹ van Eck, J. (2007) Ignoring the ethnic cancer in the Congo precludes true peace, *The Times*, 18 November, <http://www.thetimes.co.za/PrintArticle.aspx?ID=614870> Accessed 10 December 2007

¹²² Sezibera, R. (2007) A Massive Dose of Ethnicity Can Not Cure an Ethnic Cancer, *The New Times*, Kigali 28 November, <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200711280216.html> Accessed 10 December 2007

¹²³ For example, Freedman et al (2007)

¹²⁴ Volkan (2006)

of first generation teachers, to teach a traumatic past that they experienced personally, and of pupils, also survivors of the conflict, to engage with that past. A young teacher from Rwanda highlighted this when he wrote: ‘Rwandans fear thinking about our history. It is so terrible.’¹²⁵

Yet Rutayisire maintains that it is important to teach Rwandan children about the genocide of 1994 through history, social studies, civic education and other media, and that memorial sites can also be useful as educational resources.¹²⁶ However, what if the traumatic knowledge is emotionally unbearable? As an ‘outsider’ visiting a memorial site at Nyamata, I wrote in an email:

I went to the genocide memorial sites after getting to know our teacher participants so there were very human faces for me when I went to the sites. Skulls, bones and personal possessions at one memorial in particular [Nyamata] were all lying where the people had been killed. Ordered displays of rows of skulls and bones are one thing (though going down into the room of row upon row of skulls just about suffocated me), but the visible chaotic aftermath of frenzied killing, shoes, dolls, remnants of clothing, gathering the red dust of Rwanda in the church where it happened was all but unbearable. I wondered how such a past could yet be taught in schools.

The past is too present. The results of the genocide in human lives are too brutally visible in the piles of skeletons at memorial sites. This not only raises issues of ethical pedagogies of remembrance, but also of the distance needed between experiencing a traumatic past and teaching about it. In 1994 it would have been politically and emotionally unimaginable to have engaged in the immediate past in classrooms that contained severely traumatised teachers and pupils who would have been victims and perpetrators.¹²⁷ Furthermore, with the continued lack of resources and textbooks, there are a significant number of teachers who are of the opinion that it is better not to teach

¹²⁵ Workshop evaluation, London FHAO international seminar, July 2008.

¹²⁶ Rutayisire (2004): 13

¹²⁷ African Rights (2001) contains many references to traumatised pupils and teachers.

history at all than to use the old textbooks, which were ‘prepared with the aim of reinforcing ethnic divisions’.¹²⁸

Rwanda very poignantly raises the issues not only of what should be done with traumatic knowledge, but also how the intergenerational transfer of that knowledge can be interrupted. How best can the overlay of fear be addressed and therefore allayed, to allow for the ‘trampoline memory’ that keeps a person trapped in the past, to be transformed.¹²⁹ Evidence indicates that the aggressive dissemination of the new exclusionary official narrative, in spite of all rhetoric of unity, is resulting in a continued Hutu counter-narrative of chosen trauma that is keeping alive the injustices of the colonial era and relating them to the present RPF government.

Within the formal curriculum and history education, the South African experience suggests that for effective ‘interruption’ of transferred knowledge, teachers need to engage with the personal traumatic legacies of conflict. Through acknowledging the pain of the past, and the ways in which they are affected by that legacy, teachers are better able to engage with ‘difficult’ histories with their pupils. History education that supports democracy by encouraging debate, enquiry and historical interpretation, would seem to have a greater possibility of allowing for the ‘thinking of each others’ history’ – for addressing the body in the middle of the room – than an approach that supports the dissemination of a hegemonic national narrative.¹³⁰

Teachers in Rwanda are keenly aware of the responsibility of teaching their subject ‘properly’ and feel the lack of guidance. In spite of the discourse of unity, research reveals that Rwandans remain deeply concerned with issues of ethnicity.¹³¹ Questions constantly arise about how to teach their difficult history - the origins of the Rwandan people, the ethnicities, the clans and how to present different points of view to a pupil.

¹²⁸ IRDP (2006): 196

¹²⁹ See the section on memory and identity in Chapter One.

¹³⁰ Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2004) How is Education Possible When There’s a Body in the Middle of the Room? *Curriculum Inquiry*. Vol. 34, No. 1. She was writing of education in Israel and Palestine.

¹³¹ Freedman, S. et al (2004) Confronting the past in Rwandan schools, in Stover, E & Weinstein, HM (2004) *My Neighbor My Enemy* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge): 250 This also became very clear during the workshop with teachers in Butare in 2006.

During a recent international seminar in London, conducted by Facing History and Ourselves, Rwandan participants expressed the wish to introduce methodologies that would help pupils discuss and share, making classes ‘more participatory’.¹³² Indeed, the influence of the methodologies use by Facing History in the workshops can be detected in the latest history curriculum. But these methods, linked to Rwanda’s difficult history, could open teachers to accusations of fostering genocide ideology and are not likely to become widespread.

The closing remarks by one of the lecturers at the National University during the 2006 workshop in Rwanda, reminded the teachers of their role as history teachers in a society like Rwanda:

teachers, all our teachers, have the future of Rwandans actually lying in our hands. As history teachers, you see, there is no history to be changed, but a way of looking at it, you see, and we owe a lot to the next generation.¹³³

As in any post-conflict state, questions need to be raised about appropriate ethical pedagogies of remembrance, that not only provide memory for the future, but that contribute to the processing of traumatic memories in the present.

¹³² Observation notes from the London International seminar July 2008.

¹³³ Butare workshop 2006, closing remarks.