

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL LOCATION OF THE BANYAMULENGE COMMUNITY

3.1 Introduction

Contemporary researches, that give attention to the Banyamulenge like Weis (1958), Muzuri (1983), Kidogi (1985), Gatimbirizo (1988), Mbonyinkebe (1994), Dupont et al (1996), Mutambo (1997), Nzongola-Ntalaja (1999), McNulty (1999:53-82), Mamdani (1999:53-62), Ruhimbika (2001), Sarkin (2001), African Rights (2001), Koen (2002), Mangu (2002), ICG⁷⁶ (2003), Hans (2004) just to name a few, have mainly referred to the community only from a political and historical perspectives⁷⁷ in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the Great Lakes Region's context.

Some of these researches and writings are somehow a reaction to political issues, which have not been given enough space and genuine attention. Ever since, the Banyamulenge issue has been orchestrated by tensions and struggles that became entirely part of their history. One of the reasons of their conflict is based on their national identity and exclusion in the ex-Zaire (DRC). Banyamulenge community came more on an international scene during the recent war of 1996, when the late President Kabila led a rebellion movement against the late President Mobutu's regime.

However, what is often forgotten is that Banyamulenge is a people with cultural heritage and values that need to set a background for any venture in or about their community. A second reality is that as any cultures that experience change does create a cultural gap that needs to be bridged. Young generations no longer have opportunity to learn about their own history, due to "half-baked" colonial or modern civilization and Christianization of the community. Thus,

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group.

⁷⁷ Except Nyakabwa, M & Gapusi, R, *Plantes médicinales utilisées chez les Banyamulenge de Fizi au Sud-Kivu (Zaire)*, African Study Monographs, 1990, pp 101-113. This is the only research available (to the knowledge of this current study) that looks at traditional health care in Banyamulenge society. Despite that some members of the community have a rich and diverse knowledge in traditional medicine for both human and livestock, this "connaissance phytopharmacologue" (phytopharmacological knowledge) and practice has been, over the years, discouraged, despised and even treated as sin by both the colonizer and church traditions.

they are treated as grafted or translated people (see Young 2003:138-144) with no cultural values nor history, in their own land. The present generation seems to have lost touch with their cultural roots. Many young people do not have enough information on their cultural traditions. Although, no one would like to go backward, there is a need of being informed of what is one's past. Therefore, revisiting the old culture is not a matter of leisure but a matter of preserving history, which constitutes the human identity and dignity. Since most of cultural practices and information are still an oral tradition, interactions with Banyamulenge elders and old women from 1999-2004 had been done at length.

The aim of this chapter is to look at the context in which the Banyamulenge people emerge. This takes on board a general overview of their cultural, religious and political realities. The task of Patrice Lumumba in defining the Congolese national identity (Dunn 2003) within the context of colonial paternalism and tribal groupings is also highlighted.

3.2 Historical setting

3.2.1 Banyamulenge origins

Byamulenge people are mainly Congolese Tutsis whose origin can be traced back in pre-colonial Rwanda and Burundi. For many years, they were identified as Banyarwanda or Tutsi of Congo. This however, took a sharp turn due to political and social realities in early 70's and the name Banyarwanda was changed to Banyamulenge as the sole identity for them. The name (Banyamulenge), according to Kidogi (1985:7), has a long history, which dates back to 16th century during the first Rwandan migrations and was used by those who remained in Rwanda to identify those who left for this part of the region, which was now called Congo by colonialist. "*L'ethnonyme Munyamulenge n'est pas une appellation récente comme certains l'osent croire. Elle date de longtemps. Elle a été donnée pendant la première migration du 16^{ème} siècle par ceux là qui étaient restés sur place au Rwanda pré-colonial.*"⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The *ethnonyme* 'Munyamulenge' is not a recent name. It dates back to earlier times. It was given during the first migration of the 16th century by those who stayed behind in pre-colonial Rwanda.

The name Banyamulenge comes from the word *akarenge* and *uturenge* (in its plural form), which means small mountain(s) between forests. In Kinyarwanda, *Umurenge* means a village (Mutambo 1997:17). People living on those small mountains (*collines*) in the form of hamlets were called *bene-turenge* or *abanya-turenge* (owners of *uturenge*). These villages constituted an area or a location called *imurenge*. Those living in that location were called *abanyamurenge*.⁷⁹ Another historical fact is that the establishment of Banyamulenge in Lemera plateaus, coincided with the name of the one of the locations called Mulenge, which eventually would become “*un centre célèbre d’organisation de ce groupe*” (Gatimbirizo 1988:17; Kidogi 1985:9).⁸⁰

According to some historical speculations,⁸¹ Banyamulenge migrated to the plain of Ruzizi and its environs between the 17th and early 19th centuries (Weis 1958:16). For other authors, the migration period of Banyarwanda to Ruzizi valley varies from 16th to 19th centuries (Kidogi 1985:9; Dupont et al 1996:9). For the Rwandan historian Kagame (1972), quoted by Mutambo, this migration was around 1576 and 1609 (Mutambo 1997:21). Hertefeldt (1966:17) puts the migration of “*lignages tuutsi du Rwanda*” (Tutsi lineage of Rwanda – [Banyamulenge]) in 19th century.

Depelchin (1974:50-70; cf Mutambo 1997:18-23) explains that there are some reasons linked to these different migrations: search of green pastures for their livestock; kingdom conflicts during the reign of Ruganzu II Ndoli between 1510-1543 and famine under the reign of Yuhi IV Gahindiro around 1746-1802. It must be understood that those periods are just speculations. To put it in short, all migrations were before the arrival (in the region) of western exploration (1857-1858) and well before the partition of African continent in 1885 (Maquet 1955:3).

⁷⁹ Due to different migrations and contacts with other tribal groups of people, Banyamulenge community became an integration of Tutsi families from Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and from other Congolese tribes (see Mutambo 1997:41).

⁸⁰ A recognized centre for this group’s organization.

⁸¹ This time of migration, people lived completely in oral traditions.

A sin that many politicians and historians commit with regard to the Banyamulenge is the image of foreignness they paint of the community, as if they were comers and settlers in a supposed politically and geographically defined country. Secondly, it is as if only the Banyamulenge migrated, despite African historical migration movements having taken place from one corner of the continent to the other. Vansina (1966:105-114, 201-221; cf Gatimbirizo 1988:12-15), gives a simplified ethnography account on migration and formation of different groups in Eastern Congo, in which he situates migration activities of most people – such as Barega, Bashi, Bafuliru, Babembe, Banyindu, Bavira, Banyanga, Bahunde, Banande, Bahema, etc – between 16th and 19th centuries. It becomes clear that settlement of the Banyamulenge in the Eastern Congo is neither a cultural nor a political conquest, but is the result of a normal migration process, like that of any other tribe in the area or in Africa for that matter.

Based on the above few scientific data available, it is wrong to discriminate one group of people that shares the same migration procedures with the rest of other communities. To use political and constitutional mechanisms to exclude one community on the ground of racial or ethnic differences is jeopardy of justice. It exposes the victimizer's sense of lack stewardship and accountability towards his/her neighbor.

3.2.2 Geographical setting

Banyamulenge people live in South Kivu Province, eastern DRC. Among other tribes that inhabit the province are Babembe, Bafuliru, Banyindu, Bavira, Barega, Batembo, Bahavu, Bashi, Babuyu, Banyindu, Barundi, and the Babwari. The Banyamulenge live mainly in the Minembwe, Fizi and Uvira Territories in the southwest of the Province. The Kakamba locality in the Ruzizi Plain (Muzuri 1983, Kidogi 1985: 9; Gatimbirizo 1988:16), became the first settlement of the Banyamulenge, and from there, they dispersed to many other places particularly towards the high mountains northwest of the Ruzizi Plain. The high altitude of about 3.000 feet above sea level (Gatimbirizo 1988:10) was conducive to their health and that of their livestock. They eventually populated the area from Rurambo to Milimba locations, which form of local administrative entity of Minembwe Territory.

3.3 Cultural heritage

3.3.1 Definition

From an anthropological point of view, culture and religion are two distinct terms which, however, complement each other in giving meaning to a given society. From an African experience, there is no culture without religion and there is no religion without a culture. “Historically, religion is one of the institutions every society has perpetuated in an attempt to work out the meaning of existence” (Henderson 1989:50). According to Mbiti (1990:1), Africans “are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices.” Malina (1993:9) defines culture as “an organized system of symbols by which persons, things, and events are endowed with rather specific and socially shared meanings and values.” It is made up of those shared attitudes and values in any given society.

In addition, culture “is a design for life. It is a plan according to which society adapts itself to its physical, social and idealizational environment” (Luzbetak 1963:60-61). Thus, culture encompasses all ways required for survival of a community. Religion is a difficult term to define, especially from an African perspective. Mbiti (1990:1) says “religion can be discerned in terms of beliefs, ceremonies, rituals....” He continues to argue that religion “is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the strongest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned”. Religion can also be defined as beliefs in spiritual and supernatural beings.

3.3.2 Culture (*umuco*)

3.3.2.1 Habitation, economy and taboos

The Banyamulenge lived in hamlets in areas that are suited to their livestock. Until the late 70’s, they were semi-nomads whereby their movement depended on the health of the families and their livestock. Death and poverty were linked to a specific place (*ikibanza*), and every responsible head of a family had to provide protection for the family and for its possessions by changing the place of habitation. Hamlets were generally built according to clans and family affiliation.

Until the 1960s, being a pastoralist community, Banyamulenge's main source of economy was livestock. Poultry (chicken: *inkoko*) constituted a lesser economic activity used for various transactions such as sale, exchange for a service rendered by neighbors⁸² or to build relationship (*ubgira*) with neighbors. It was shameful for the Banyamulenge to eat chicken. To this day, pigs (*ingurube*) are regarded as unclean animals, which should not be kept by any member of the community. Goats (*ihene*) could be sold or exchanged for whatever was needed by the family but was only to be eaten by men and it was a taboo for women. Sheep (*intama*) was regarded as a peaceful and sacred animal which was not supposed to be eaten.

A cow (*inka*) was considered next to man. Besides its milk (*amata*) and meat (*inyama*) being staple food, and butter (*amavuta*); its horns (*amahembe*) were used as water containers; its skin (*uruhu*) served as clothing and mat; its urine (*amaganga*) was a real disinfectant; the cow-dung (*amase*) were used to roughcast houses (*guhoma*) and fertilizer (*igitebo*). The cow served as dowry (*inkwano*) and the source of economy for the family. Finally the cow was and still is not just an animal but called *imbyeyi* or *mwimanyi* (benefactor) as Kidogi (1985:24) calls it “à ce sujet une vache laitière est appelée ‘imbyeyi’ ou bien on pouvait encore l’appeler ‘mwimanyi’ c’est-à-dire bienfaitrice.”⁸³

For ages, the community lived on milk (*amata*), cooked blood (*ikiremve*) and cow's meat. As a result of contacts with other cultures, the Banyamulenge started to cultivate and eat other forms of food. Fish, pork, chicken and all game were regarded as unclean which no one in the community was allowed to eat. Their main vessels were: containers made of woods (*inkongoro*) for milk in different categories; and a big calabash (*igisabo*) for making butter (*amavuta*). *Imbehe* (a wooden plate) and *inkono* or *ibumba* (cooking pot), came from their neighbors.

3.3.2.2 Clothing

Adults wore cow hides, while children wore goats' and sheep skins. Women also wore jewels and ornaments around their necks, hips and legs. The bracelets they wore were known as

⁸² Neighbours here mean members of other different tribes/communities mentioned above in section 3.2.2.

⁸³ In this regard, a milk cow is called ‘*imbyeyi*’ or one could even call it ‘*mwimanyi*’ which means benefactor.

inyerere, *ibitare* and *inigi*. A bracelet (*urugoro*) was worn on the arms for men. Married and unmarried people could be distinguished by the way, they dressed. Women wore skirts (*inkanda*) made out of cowhides, while young boys and girls wore the softer hides of calves and goats. Men wore cows' hides in a style known as *urubega*.

Each social group had its hair shaven according to a specific custom. Men's hair was shaven, leaving a line from the front to the neck (*isunzu*); women's hair was shaven bold (*agakumbu*) while for the boys and girls, some hair remained on the crown of the head, and was known also as *isunzu*. The unmarried members of the community could be differentiated from the married ones by their clothing or by their haircut. A lotion made from butter (*amavuta*) that is mixed with special tree leaves for fragrance and left to mature in a container (*icwende*) for a long time, was used as special skin lotion.

3.3.2.3 Poetry, song and dance

The men and women of the community were blessed with talents in songs (*indirimbo*), dance (*imbyino*) and poetry (*ibyvugo* or *ibironda*). Unfortunately these traditions were only passed on by means of oral tradition and are not otherwise recorded. Songs were philosophical and psychological in composition. They were used to praise both men and women of the community whose social achievements were lauded; other songs were in praise of cows or were used on special occasions. On the other hand, poetry was used in defiance of adversaries.

Traditional dances of the Banyamulenge are known as *Gutamba* (a slow dance), *kubyina izinka* (an energetic dance), and *Imbarato*.⁸⁴ These dances are performed on special occasions and festivities, such as marriage, sacrifice, and usual dancing occasions known as *ibitaramo*. The *ibisabo* (big calabashes), *imyirongi* (flutes), and *inanga* (harps) were used as music instruments. One of the traditional songs goes like this:

*Ni Rugerera rwasimbye urugabane itaha yigaza murugamba,
Nanje nkumbuye Rumaranzara, inka yandemesheje mu Rugarama.*

⁸⁴ The *Imbarato* or *Cihariza* is another type of dance taken over from their Bafuliru neighbours, and its main song was called *ntamakemwa*.

In this song, the singer is singing the praises of his cow that had taken away his shame and hunger and had cared for him in Rugarama (the village he lived in).

3.3.2.4 Social and family classifications

Belonging to a reputable and renowned family is regarded as prestigious. Records are traced generations back to establish the status of grandfathers or great-grandfathers. This spirit of genealogy is still strong in maintaining ties with family roots. The society is built on family, clan and community (Mutambo 1997:132-133; cf Bourgeois 1954:112). For example, Rukundwa, the son of Sebitereko, son of Ndangamyi, belongs to the family of Rugayampunzi in the clan of Abitira, which is part of the Banyamulenge community.

Socialization, on the other hand, is determined by age and sex group. Community leaders are classified according to their wealth, for example the head of cattle one possesses and the size of the family (the number of children or family members). The bigger the family, the wealthier the individual was. Consequently, polygamy was generally accepted and was also considered as a sign of wealth.

The first-born boy in a family is the immediate heir to his father's responsibility and if the father dies, he should look after the rest of the household. In this event, the first-born is given a spear by a council of elders as a sign of full replacement of his late father. Family elders would help him (the heir) to achieve higher status and to be more effective, not only in the immediate family, but also in the community. If a girl happens to be the first-born, she would not be regarded as a first-born to the family for she could not inherit her father's responsibility. The culture treats her as a "passenger" who is born for others, that is, she will get married and will leave her father's family. Therefore, even if a boy is the last-born among many girls in the family, he would still be regarded and called the first-born.

Elders of each family, clan, village and location constitute a council of elders, which deals with all matters arising in the society and this council is respected by all. Poor people (where poverty is determined by the lack of children and a small number of cattle) and women generally do not have much of a say in society. The *imfura* (men of integrity and

compassion) is another category in society. The *Imfura* could be from high or middle classes and but would show mercy for the poor. They are known for their generosity in the community. The same title or discernment could also be given to women of integrity (*imfurakazi*). *Imfura* and *imfurakazi* were persons full of (humanity) *ubuntu* in them.

In the past, the community had a tradition of exchanging information (*kwibgirana* and *kubgirana amakuru*).⁸⁵ When two strangers met along the way, they would stop and would introduce themselves as a gesture of unity, solidarity and communication. In the process, they would exchange information regarding their identities, and that constituted a system of communication between different places.⁸⁶ During the course of a journey, this exchange of information would take place with all members of the community one would encounter along the way. Upon his return (*kuzindukuruka*), villagers would come to greet the journeyman and would ask him about his journey (*kubaz' amakuru*). His account would start with the day of his departure and would describe the journey in every detail. This account is called the *mpuruyaha*.

Education was informal. Tales of old people in villages, rituals, gatherings, ceremonies and festivals all formed part of the learning system. Different procedures are followed for the initiation of boys and girls. Boys are taught the *kuragira inka* (the art of herding cows in the fields), and the *kurinda* (the act of being brave against enemies and wild animals) to be able to protect their families and livestock from predators. Fear is associated with female. Different values are applied to girls. They had to grow up with prejudices that they were inferior to boys. They were taught from an early age how to do domestic work, such as collection of firewood (*gutoragura*), cleaning of the cows and calves sheds (*gukuka* and *kwahira icarire c'inyana*), assisting men when milking the cows (*gukamisha*), fetching water (*kuvoma*) and cooking (*guteka*). Boys and girls were taught songs and dance. Early marriage depended on how highly rated a girl's domestic activities were (*ubukuba*), or by the wealth of her parents. A girl's virginity was central to the honor of the family. Girls were taught how to keep themselves pure so as not to destroy their lives.

⁸⁵ *Kwibgirana* means to introduce one another and *kubgirana amakuru* is information exchange.

⁸⁶ The exchange of information includes names, parents, clans and location, purpose of journeys, and any matter arising on point of departures or on the way.

From an economic point of view, the community was quite socialist in nature. Wealth was measured by family – number of children and the head of cattle one owned; poverty was the opposite. People lived in villages according to families. They lived in the same type of house (huts), had the same staple food, namely milk, meat, but also maize, cassava, beans and bananas being gradually introduced to the diet. They wore the same clothes (cows' hides), and grazed their cattle in the same fields. But each individual family had its own cattle. There were ways of solving poverty in the community. For instance, childlessness was dealt with in two ways: Should the wife be infertile, the husband would be encouraged to marry another woman. Should the man be impotent, another man from his family would offer to father offspring for him (*kumubyarira*), for life in the community was about sharing.

In the case of a cattle shortage or in case of calamity, immediate clans would donate cows (*gushumbusha*)⁸⁷ to the poor/victim. It was also done on a more personalized basis (*kugaba*).⁸⁸ There was a certain obligation to give towards the poor. The one who receives a cow will honor his benefactor (*umuhanyi*),⁸⁹ one such example is a poem in which a beneficiary expresses his gratitude to his benefactor “*yankuye mugisaka anshira mugisagara*”⁹⁰ (he who removed me from the bush and put me in a town/village). A more lucrative way of helping the poor was when an opportunity was given to the poor man to be a herdsman (*umushumba*) of the rich person's herds for a year in return for a cow.

⁸⁷ *Gushumbusha* is practiced mainly when the beneficiary had been hit by calamity that destroyed all or part of his herds or he had lost his wife and wanted to remarry. However, this can also be an expression of generosity in the family and the community when those who have enough would share their wealth with the poor among them.

⁸⁸ *Kugaba* expresses generosity, but is also a way of strengthening relationships between relatives, friends within and beyond kinship.

⁸⁹ The term is commonly used in the region by the Bashi, Bafuliru in South Kivu, but also by Burundians and Rwandans.

⁹⁰ The expression means that the benefactor has alleviated the misery and shame of the poor.

3.4 Marriage

3.4.1 Dowry payment procedure

Marriage in the Banyamulenge community is unique and generally keeps the community from tribal inter-marriage.⁹¹ Marriage could be between two families belonging to two different clans. Marriages between cousins were permitted. This also applied to Burundians and Rwandans (Bourgeois 1954:123). Dowry could not be paid in any form other than cows. Other tribes could pay dowry in the form of goats, money, hoes, clothes, et cetera. The number of cows to make up the dowry depended on one's wealth. Social classes played a role: Poor married into poor families and rich into rich families. It is important to note that a groom could not choose bride, as it was the prerogative of parents and families. The marriage ceremony had various stages:

- Introduction (*kubaz'umugeni*) betrothal or engagement;
- Payment of dowry in installments (*inka yo gufat'irembo*). This period could stretch over many months or even years;
- Payment of dowry in full (*gukoshanya*).

The payment of dowry is a whole process. Before the betrothal, a young man does not own cows of his own. Therefore, his family would pay the dowry (*inkwano*) on his behalf. The bigger the dowry, the bigger the share (*indongoranyo*) the groom (and the bride) would get to start their family life with (see Bourgeois 1954:141-143). A part of the dowry paid (*gukura izigitwe*) will remain with the bride's family and the rest would be given to the new family to be. For instance, if the groom's family paid twenty cows, the bride's family would keep between seven and ten,⁹² and would give the rest to the groom as the foundation for his

⁹¹ Inter-marriage practices, especially with assimilated groups within the Banyamulenge community, were common, but not so much with outsiders.

⁹² This depends on negotiations. Because there is no exact number of cows required. Between 1978 and 1990, some regulations had been enacted by council of elders, church leaders and local chiefs within the community, on matters of dowry. The council had agreed to put the share of the bride's parents (*gukura izigitwe*) at four cows as a standard. But this procedure was later abolished due to various circumstances.

future family. But poor families could only offer a few cows (sometimes as little as one or two). This dowry is called *inyegeka*,⁹³ because the groom would not get his *indongoranyo*.

3.4.2 Preparation of the bride to become integrated with the family of the groom

Three options were used in preparing the bride to integrate with the groom's family:

- First of all the groom could go and live with his fiancée's family for 12 to 24 months, (this is known as *gutahira*). During this time the groom familiarized himself with his future family-in-law. The groom was free to stay with his wife to be. After this period, he would return to his home and his family would arrange the wedding ceremony;
- The groom's family could decide that the bride should move in with them without the *gutahira*. A ceremony will be organized and the bride would be brought home;
- The groom could be motivated by his peers to simply snatch his bride from her family (*guterura*) and take her home. In this case, a messenger would be sent to the bride's family to inform them of what happened. The message is known as *kwibura* (to ask for forgiveness for the act committed).

Whatever option is exercised, each ceremony was characterized by a particular speech (*gufomora*) and the consumption of local brew (*inzoga*). Marriage ceremonies were held at night and were accompanied by drinking, eating, singing and dancing. The bride and the groom would exchange big calabashes (*ibisabo*) and both would move around a burning fire (*igicaniro*) before entering their house. *Igisabo*⁹⁴ and *igicaniro* symbolized blessing and wealth. On the day of the wedding two important rituals took place: One is the use of *amata* (milk). The groom and the bride would hold milk in their mouths and spit it on each other's legs as a sign of a pure marriage and to pledge their commitment to each other. This was called *gucir'an'imhazi*.⁹⁵ The second ritual was performed before the couple would sleep together, when two other young persons of their age (a young man and young woman)

⁹³ Insufficient payment of a dowry.

⁹⁴ *Igisabo* is a singular form of *ibisabo*.

⁹⁵ This is equivalent of the modern exchange of wedding rings.

would join them on the same bed for a while before taking their leave. This was called *guter'umwishwa*.

The bride would not appear in public, but would remain in the house in a place called *mugakinga* for one to two weeks, until her father-in-law would come to greet her (*gutinyura*). The greeting would contain words such as “this family is yours, make it your own, organize it, defend it and multiply it. You are no longer a stranger, its people are your people and its wealth is yours as well.” This event would be followed by a visit from her family, coming to greet her (*gukoza muziko*). Six or nine months later, the wife would go to greet her parents and stay with them for a month (*kuramutsa*). During this initial phase, she would still be called *umugeni* (bride) and would be in the company of her sisters-in-law (*baramukazi*), the wives of her brothers-in-law (*bakeba*) and occasionally with her mother-in-law and the grandmother of her husband. They would familiarize her with the family's internal affairs (what to do and what not to do in the family). As a way of expressing respect, the bride did not call her parents-in-law and those related by their names (*gutsinda*). For this period, she depends on her mother-in-law in sharing kitchen and other household activities.

Finally, once she had settled into her own life, she would be allowed to again visit her parents for six or twelve months. Upon her return, she would be escorted by many people and would bring all kitchen utensils and food along and from then on, she would have her own kitchen (*guteka*). By this time, the husband would have changed camps and peer group. From now on, he would be associated with the married ones who would instruct him as far as his family responsibilities were concerned.

Marriage was not a private business between a man and a woman, but a family affair. The wife, who became part of the family, became the wife of the entire family. This to some extent protected wives from abuses of irresponsible husbands, whereby, every matter arising would be treated as a family issue. According to the customs, peers of the same family could exchange wives for sexual intercourse, and children born from such exchange, still belonged to the family. Identity was vested in the extended family rather than in the immediate one. This way of life enabled impotent men and widows to have children born to them. Adultery was an offense if committed outside the family of involved partners, and was a serious

offense if committed outside tribal boundaries. This resulted in immediate divorce or the woman had to undergo certain cleansing rituals and would be given fines (*iciru*) before she could again have sexual intercourse with her husband.

Separation (*kwahukana*) and divorce (*gutandukana burundu*) did not occur as a rule, but were allowed under certain circumstances:

- Adultery (with men outside the family);
- Laziness;
- Stubbornness of either partner;
- Infertility.⁹⁶

3.5 Religion

3.5.1 God “*Imana*”

For generations, “New events (bad or good), such as conflicts, wars, education, modern civilization, cultural interference, do affect existing cultural norms in any given community. But traditional religion does not know reform, one has to stick with it. “Religion in African societies is written not on paper but in people’s hearts, minds, oral history, rituals ...” (Mbiti 1990:3). The term *Imana* (God) is used to refer to a Supreme Being, unreachable beyond the other gods. He is the creator of all things (Bourgeois 1956:11). *Imana* is only invoked when all other earthly, spiritual possibilities and alternatives failed in a given situation. In such cases people would resort to declaring that “only God can intervene or only God knows” (*ahasigaye n’ah’Imana*), implying that blessings and prosperity come from God. On the other hand, there was *Nyabihori* (the devil), the creator of the evil who inflicted poverty upon people.

One of the Banyamulenge women songs is about *Imana* and it says:

Icompa nkamenya aho irara nkayipfukamira nkayisenge,

⁹⁶ This being the case, the man was encouraged to marry another woman and be polygamous.

*Nkayibaza ico yampoye (yahoye umutindi)*⁹⁷ (May I know where he lives and I would go to worship him and ask him why he is against me).

Moreover, *Imana* was also mentioned as a way of dealing with impossibilities.⁹⁸

3.5.2 Worship and high priests

The Banyamulenge, like their neighbors, had mediators that acted between God and the community. *Ryangombe*⁹⁹ is the Banyamulenge's mediator. *Ryangombe* is also the deity of many communities in Eastern Africa including the Banyarwanda, Barundi, Bashi, Bahavu and Bahaya (see Bourgeois 1956:10-12; Berger 1981:57-66, 149-151; D'Hertefeldt, Trouwborst & Scherer 1962). For the Banyamulenge, *Ryangombe* took on the form of a woman.

There was also another agent of god, called *Binego* or *Mushayija*, who took on the form of a man. This agent was tough, had nothing to offer and people feared him. *Binego* called himself “*Ndi Mushaija, ndi rukenya-bugingo rwanjanja, ndabyarwa si mbyara*” (I am Mushaija, the destroyer of life; I am born and cannot give birth). On the other hand, *Ryangombe* was the god of blessings and procreation. *Ryangombe* and *Binego* were worshiped by sitting on chairs holding cooking sticks (*umwoko*) and sticks (*inkoni*) respectively as symbols of family life. Worship was accompanied by offerings which could be in the form of thanksgiving, praise, a pledge or a plea for forgiveness.

Community worshippers would pray and ask for protection: “*kajikera Ryangombe, uramp'ibyara n'itunga*” (live long *Ryangombo*, may you give me many children and wealth). Only those who had gone through religious initiation (*kubandwa*) assumed the role

⁹⁷ The song was composed by an infertile woman who did not have the fortune of her own children. The song takes on the form of a prayer.

⁹⁸ *Imana* was able to repair the un-repairable, hence the expression *ahasisigaye nah' Imana* (only God knows...) is still used, even today.

⁹⁹ Berger (1981:142-151) shows how legends about *Ryangombe* slightly differ from one community to the other in Eastern and Central African countries.

of Ryangombe and Binego. It must also be noted that unlike many of their neighboring tribes, Banyamulenge never worshipped objects and nature.

There used to be four ways of offering sacrifice and worship (rituals):

- Worshipping ancestors' spirits (*imuzimu ya basogokuru*): the family would build a small building or used a piece of prepared land to which they would bring fire, milk and/or drinks (local brew). They would pray to the spirits (communication between the living and the dead). They believed that their ancestors never disappeared and still had power and an important role to play in daily lives of the living.
- *Kumurika*. A female lamb (blameless), fire and milk would be brought before a prepared place (altar) and the head of the family would confess all their needs onto the lamb, called *intama y'icogoro*. The lamb was presented to god as an offering of the family and was not supposed to be killed. This process was called *kumurika*.¹⁰⁰ A calf, called *inka ya kagoro*, was also used in place of a lamb.
- *Kubandwa*. This was the initiation of persons into the group of priests (*imandwa*). This group consisted of men and women who held a secret (*ibanga*) of spirits. On the day of initiation, they would paint their faces with white soil (*ingwa*), and would act in a wild manner and would utter shameful things. This ceremony would last one to two days.
- *Guterekera*. In case of a problem or difficulty being experienced in a family, the head of the family would go to a traditional healer (*umupfumu*) or a seer (*umuragu*) to find out why his family or livestock was in trouble. This process was called *kuraguza*. The healer would then advise that his ancestors' spirits were haunting him for one of the following reasons: either he had not been true to his pledges made during previous difficulties or had taken too long to communicate with his

¹⁰⁰ This process corresponds with the scapegoat offering in Leviticus 16. Although in the case of the Banyamulenge, a lamb and a calf were used instead of a goat, they were not to be sent into the desert, but would not be killed, but be set free.

ancestral spirits and/or giving sacrifice; it could also be that orphans and widows were neglected in the community or in a particular family. The person then would plan a ceremony of sacrifice called *guterekera*.

Guterekera was the most expensive, expansive and sacred of ceremonies. The family concerned would prepare a beautiful and blameless ox, which would be examined to make sure it had no blemish (*agasembga*) before it could be offered. A selected man would be given an axe to kill the ox with; if he cuts twice, or the ox groans, then it was not worthy of sacrifice (*gupfuba*) and another ox would be selected and killed. The ritual was to only cut once without any noise being heard. The family would prepare vast quantities of drinks and milk; others in the village and its surroundings would be invited and would even make contributions towards the ceremony. The ceremony would last two to three days. The family would also invite priests (*imandwa*), relatives and friends to the ceremony.

Come worship time during *guterekera* ceremony, the high priests (Ryangombe and Binego) would sit together on chairs in front of the house. The head of the family would present all his needs, thereafter the gods would accept the sacrifice and “grant his requests”. The rest of the congregation was also free to worship and present their needs. As a sign of worship and of their commitment, the congregation went through the procession of *icuhagiro* (cleansing symbol). The high priests would use white soil (*ingwa*) mixed with water into a big pot, and everyone who came to worship here was painted. The painting being called *ikirabo*, while leaves of a special tree called *umuko* were used in the painting exercise. The high priests would drink from either a pot filled with local brew (*inzoga*) or a container (*inkongoro*) filled with milk (*amata*) and spit (*gufuhira*) the contents over all of those present as a sign of blessing and prosperity.

A burning fire called *igicaniro* (altar), considered to be sacred was made on an open patch in front of the house of an initiated family. On the day of a sacrifice, they would take all bones (*amagufwa*), abdomen (*amayezi*), horns (*amahembe*) and blood (*amaraso*) of the sacrificed ox and burn them on the fire. As the smoke rose and spiraled, it was believed that their prayers were heard.

In conclusion, what is important to know about the Banyamulenge's religious life, is that religion was part of a cultural process. Worship was never practiced individually or secretly: the gods belonged to the community and should only be worshipped through and by the community.

3.6 Political identity

3.6.1 General overview of Congolese politics: From colony to independence

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of a few countries in the world that has changed name several times in the course of its existence. This can be attributed to political fluidity and uncertainty that surround its history. Being the third largest country in Africa with 2,345,410 km², it has more than 450 tribes within her geo-political borders on nine neighboring countries.¹⁰¹ It is also the only country in Africa that once was a privately owned colony, and as the African country most envied by western imperialists, because of its natural resources and strategic location at the center of Africa.

It was the imperial wrangles over the control of the Congo basin, that Europe convened the Berlin Conference 1884-1885, which subsequently divided Africa (see Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:14-29). Despite her natural and manpower resources, DRC is placed among the poorest and bloodiest countries of the world because of bad governance and cruelty imposed by both the colonizer and dictatorial leadership. Often, it has been labeled by western authors as the "Heart of darkness"¹⁰² or the "Noble Savage" (Newbury 1998:76; Dunn 2003:4-6; see Hochschild 1998; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002).

¹⁰¹ The DRC borders on the east Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania; Angola in the south-west; Congo Brazzaville lies to the northwest; it has the Republic of Central Africa and Sudan to its north; and in the south it borders on Zambia.

¹⁰² The term was originally used by Joseph Conrad in his novel published in 1899, describing the Congo under Belgian colony.

The country is divided into ten administrative provinces¹⁰³: Bandundu, Bas-Congo, Equateur, Kasai Occidental, Kasai Oriental, Katanga, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Province Orientale, and Kinshasa as capital city. To maintain a certain harmony amongst the diversity of its people, the DRC has four national languages: Swahili; Lingala, Kikongo and Kiluba, while French is the official language.

3.6.2 Colonial overview

From 1886 to 1908, the “Congo Free State” (CFS)¹⁰⁴ under king Leopold was ruled by an iron fist of the worst kind, generally referred to as the “red rubber”¹⁰⁵ business or the Belgian king’s “rubber regime”. The latter reference was used by many authors (Slade 1962:182-192; Schuyler 1962:47-63; Hochschild 1998; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:20-33; Dunn 2003:50-59). Several millions of people died in the “red rubber” business for the profit of king Leopold and the Belgian kingdom (cf Schuyler 1962:61; Hochschild 1998:233; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:13-60; Dunn 2003:44-45). As the blood of innocent Congolese stained the soil, Leopold’s considerable wealth grew even more. According to Schuyler (1962:51), Leopold was regarded as one of the world’s wealthiest men during the period of the rubber business. At one stage, according to Schuyler (1962:51), Leopold declared “My rights on the Congo are indivisible – no one possesses any right of intervention.”

The carnage that took place in the king’s private concession enriched him even more while “nothing was left for the Congolese” (Schuyler 1962:51). Horrible killings and oppression of the Congolese under Belgian rule brought shame upon and was an indictment to the European imperialists when the British shipping agent E. D. Morel exposed the horrors “based on the use of forced labor in the gathering of rubber” (Dunn 2003:50). The young Morel wrote that a “system has been introduced by the king Leopold II in the Congo Basin, imitated in some respect by others, which is turning its servants into brute beasts, disgracing European prestige, befouling civilization, and jeopardizing the whole future of European effort in the Dark Continent” (quoted by Dunn 2003:50).

¹⁰³ According to the new constitutional project, the country will have 25 provinces.

¹⁰⁴ *Etat Indépendant du Congo* (EIC).

¹⁰⁵ The term was coined by anti-colonialist campaigns against atrocities in the Congo, led by Morel and missionaries in the West.

Morel began a campaign against king Leopold and in 1904 launched an international organization called the “Congo Reform Association” (CRA). The campaign joined efforts with Protestant white missionaries who revealed the Belgians atrocities against the people of the Congo (Schuyler 1962:58-61). The king was eventually obliged to hand the Congo to the Belgian government (Slade 1962:182-192). At the same time, the Catholic church was only represented by Belgian missionaries who in turn compromised the church’s prophetic mission, while human dignity was being violated. According to Dunn (2003:50-51; cf Slade 1962:183), Morel’s courage was aroused by the fact that the Belgian ships from the Congo were laden with rubber and ivory, but on the return voyage to the Congo they “returned containing only arms and ammunitions.”

French and British imperialism was generally conceived in such a way that it would foster “civilization and European culture” within the colonized states (Young 2001:25-43; Dunn 2003:51). Unfortunately Belgium, being a tribal (Gatimbirizo 1988:24), divided, small and poor nation, had no proper international policy to govern its imperial system in the Congo or in Rwanda-Urundi region. One of the Belgian socialists who were opposed to the Belgian king’s brutal regime in the CFS, as quoted by Slade (1962:206) said: “We are incapable of giving to the Negroes that well-being which we have not yet achieved for ourselves.”

Eventually, as Dunn (2003:51) points out, Morel and the anti-colonial movement presented the barbarity of the “Belgians as uncivilized or, more specifically, as illegitimate bearers of civilization.” The true colors of the Belgians were exposed by anti-colonial campaigners who referred to the Belgian king as being “greed or evil incarnate”. The king and his colonial state “were at risk of losing their sovereign claim to the Congo by losing their ability to author the Congolese social identity,” thereby endangering Western colonial narratives. As Dunn (2003:52) says “[t]hey threatened to bring to light the violence underpinning all colonial and imperial projects.”

However, under pressure, king Leopold proposed an alternate solution “by selling his personal estate [the Congo] to the Belgian government” in 1908 at a cost of “over 100

million francs” (Dunn 2003:58). The “Congo Free State” changed its name to the “Belgian Congo.” It must also be clearly understood that anti-colonial campaigns against the Belgian king were also mounted by Belgian people who were opposed to the brutal treatment of the Congolese (Slade 1962:199-210).

Despite the irony of the king Leopold being willing to sell the Congo to the Belgian government, the plight of the Congolese remained unchanged. “Leopold II’s successors continued the process of constructing and imposing a colonial state in the Congo, violently extending Belgian occupation of the Congo’s physical space and forcefully suppressing indigenous resistance” (Dunn 2003:58-59).¹⁰⁶ It is from this perspective that the Congolese identity was to be defined.

The colonial definition of a Congolese identity (Dunn 2003:26-27) was concerned “with fixing and policing boundaries of difference.” As Dunn continues to argue from a colonial discourse, the Belgian colonizers, as did the other European colonizers, constructed the non-European as the *Other* in contrast to the European *Self*. This became the basis of the Belgian’s definition of the Congolese social and political identity. Whites portrayed themselves as “physical embodiments of culture and civilization, while Africans were presented as lack or a negation of these characteristics”. This characterization goes back to the Portuguese contact in 1482 with Congolese. From this period onward, “Christian/European” viewed indigenous (nonbelievers) as “savage idolaters, sinners untouched by God’s redeeming love”, while the “dominant belief was that salvation could only come about through increased, and controlled contact with Europeans.”

Moreover, the architect of the Congolese colony, Henry Morton Stanley (Marvel 1948:9-20; cf Dunn 2003:29), who became king Leopold II’s agent in the Congo, was an opportunist who wanted to build his social reputation at home. Dunn agrees that Stanley “employed the African Other” in an ongoing invention of his own identity. While “he passed himself off as a middle-class American with an elaborate background, he was really born a poor,

¹⁰⁶ Although Slade (1962:210-214) argues that, the Congolese situation had improved to some extent. For Nzongola-Ntalaja (1998:6), “the basic features of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression remained essentially the same, albeit less brutal.”

illegitimate Welsh orphan.” According to Marvel (1948:9), Stanley’s original identity was that of one John Rowlands born in Wales, a poor orphan who never knew his father and “rarely saw his mother.” Longing for a place to call his own, Rowlands ended up in a Welsh orphanage, which he later deserted and managed to get on a ship to America, where he was adopted by Henry Morton Stanley.

Undoubtedly, according to Dunn (2003:29), Stanley spent most of his life “(re)inventing his own identity.” His writings on the Congo should be seen therefore, to some degree, as “part of his project to align himself with certain Euro-American, civilized, white ‘self’”. Stanley, as quoted by Dunn (2003:26), once said “On the 14th August, 1879, I arrived before the mouth of this river to ascend it, with the novel mission of sowing along its banks civilised settlements, to peacefully conquer and subdue it, to remold it in harmony with modern ideas....”

For the Belgians, their colonial project in the Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi was fundamental in defining and shaping their national identity in Europe and the world. Being a small nation, it was imperative for them to prove that it too can be part of imperialism. Dunn (2003:29) observes “[a]s a colonial power, [Belgium] had moved beyond its physical and economic limitations to take its place amongst the larger, stronger nations of Europe.” Belgium was small, poor and tribal, its population being divided into Walloon and Flemish ethnic antagonism (Gatimbirizo 1988:24; cf Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999b:48-49), which contaminated its colonies during the colonial period. Mamdani (1999:55) and Van Woudenberg (2004:191) further elaborate on the argument that Belgian colonial rule accentuated ethnic divisions in the DRC. Another reality is that, unlike other European imperial systems (Young 2001:25-43), the colonial policy of the Belgians was paternalistic. In terms of such policy Africans were perceived as “children” or “feminized, helpless victims” (Dunn 2003:30).

At one stage Stanley, as quoted by Dunn (2003:30), defined a Congolese as “a barbarian man” who “is pure materialist”. He is full of cravings for possessing something that he cannot describe. He is like a child which has not acquired the faculty of articulation”. Such

policy never prepared the Congolese to become competitive, responsible and free in a world of business and development. The Belgian colonial policy, if at all a policy, hardly envisioned the future of either the colonizer or the colonized (cf Young 1979:138-144). The Congo ascended to independence from this reality, with no clear political, social and economic vision. Judging the Congo by its failures without looking at its colonial past, would be missing an essential part of its foundation.

3.6.3 The DRC politics: Nationalism or tribalism

As the winds of change and anti-colonial campaigns swept across Africa, the Belgian Congo obtained its independence for which it was not prepared on 30 June 1960. The country under the leadership of President Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba changed its name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A few months later, Lumumba was assassinated under mysterious circumstances (De Witte 2001). Five years later, on 24 November 1965, General Joseph Mobutu staged a successful coup d'état (Young & Turner 1985:41-60). Since the country's independence its democracy was unstable. As a result of its flaws, it was soon challenged by tribalism, rebellions, secession attempts and economic bankruptcy (see Clarke 1968; Young & Turner 1985; McNulty 1999:53-83; Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999b:50-52; 2002:94-168).

Laurent Desire Kabila, with the support of youths from the eastern regions and among them from the Banyamulenge community, under the AFDL,¹⁰⁷ waged a rebellion which toppled Mobutu in May 1997. On 2 August 1998, the RCD¹⁰⁸ started another rebellion against Kabila, who was assassinated on 16 January 2001. He was replaced by his son Joseph Kabila, while the country was going through its phase of balkanization. After a cease-fire was achieved under the Lusaka Agreement of 1999, a peace agreement, the direct result of Inter-Congolese Dialogue, was finally signed in 2003 in Pretoria, South Africa, between the warring factions and which resulted in the current transitional government.

¹⁰⁷ *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre).

¹⁰⁸ *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (Congolese Rally for Democracy).

In dealing with local resistance against Belgian colonialism, it is interesting to note that this campaign was largely a tribal affair. While the Belgians had banned political activities, they encouraged tribal associations instead (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:76). In the absence of a sense of nationhood from the start, nationalism was expressed in terms of kinship affiliations (Young and Turner 1985:40). Before 1957, the Belgians had adopted the politics of divided and rule in the Congo, and as a result all associations which expressed political feelings were ethnically constructed.

In this regard, the following serve as examples: the ABAKO,¹⁰⁹ BALUBAKAT,¹¹⁰ CONAKAT,¹¹¹ and UNIMO.¹¹² It is only from 1957 to 1960 in the wake of independence that some of the tribal groupings tried to convert their associations into political parties. Among the stronger political parties that were formed were the PNP¹¹³ and the MNC.¹¹⁴ The latter later split into Lumumba and Kalondji wings. However, with Mobutu's ascent to power, all political parties were banned and a one party system was adopted under the MPR¹¹⁵ in the early 1970s.

Protests and demonstrations were organized in urban centers. But as Mangu (2002:318) observes, many of these movements lacked political leadership. Many of them were basically unionists striving for an improvement in their social and economic conditions. In early January 1959, a major demonstration took place in Kinshasa resulting in furious colonial repression under the *Force Publique*¹¹⁶ in which hundreds of demonstrators were

¹⁰⁹ *Association de Bakongo* (Association of the Bakongo).

¹¹⁰ *Baluba du Katanga* (The Baluba of Katanga).

¹¹¹ *Confédération Nationale des Tribus du Katanga* (National Confederation of Katanga Tribes).

¹¹² *Union Nationale des Mongo* (The National Union of Mongo).

¹¹³ *Parti National du progrès* (National Progressive Party).

¹¹⁴ *Mouvement National Congolais* (National Congolese Movement).

¹¹⁵ *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (Popular Revolutionary Movement).

¹¹⁶ The Colonial army was a mixture of Belgians and Congolese nationals.

killed. However, these protests all contributed to mass movement awareness as far as anti-colonial campaigns were concerned.

3.6.4 Emergence and disappearance of Patrice Lumumba

In tribal politics, Patrice Lumumba chaired the Mutualité des Batetela¹¹⁷ before becoming the leader of the APIC (Lumumba 1962:11),¹¹⁸ while Kasa-Vubu led the ABAKO. While working at the post office in Kisangani, Lumumba served in the union workers' associations (Lumumba 1962:11). Lumumba, together with a few others were considered among the country's advanced persons (*les évolués*). Lumumba's political formation took place under the influence of Belgian colonial paternalistic trends, which Lumumba naively believed could through development and assimilation (Lumumba 1962:19-22) change the image of Congo. Like all his compatriots, Lumumba never had any contact with other African anti-colonial activists. It was only in late 1958 at the All-African People's Conference in Accra, Ghana that he was introduced to Pan-Africanism and the political struggle for African independence.

The conference proved to be formative for Lumumba and other young Congolese leaders who attended the meeting. Upon his return, Lumumba's language and attitude had changed. He now maintained that independence of the Congo was not a gift, but a right that had been taken from them by the colonizer (Lumumba 1963:20).¹¹⁹ It is somehow paradoxical for Congolese politicians, who had not yet developed any nationalistic and political strategies of their own, to summarily adopt an anti-colonial discourse and to demand immediate independence notwithstanding the fact that they, unlike the British and French colonies, had never been assisted by metropolitan policies. One thing was however certain. Lumumba (1962:119) knew that much work needed to be done, to educate the Congolese as far as

¹¹⁷ The Batetela Mutuality.

¹¹⁸ *Association du Personnel Indigène de la Colonie* (Association of Indigenous People of the Colony).

¹¹⁹ Speaking to the crowd that had come to welcome him back from the meeting in Accra, he declared : *L'indépendance que nous réclamons au nom de la paix ne doit pas non plus être considérée par la Belgique comme un cadeau mais au contraire, il s'agit de la jouissance d'un droit que le peuple congolais avait perdu.* (The independence that we are claiming in the name of peace should not be considered by Belgium as a gift, on the contrary, it is about exercising of a right, which the Congolese people had lost).

national values were concerned, to give them a greater sense of responsibility and to cultivate a spirit of self-determination. The following is an indication of Lumumba's initial thoughts with regard to education:

*L'éducation dispensé jusqu' à présent aux Congolais, semble être trop imprégnée des préceptes abstraits qui sont, non seulement étrangers à la mentalité Bantoues, mais dépassent parfois leur entendement. Cela explique la précarité et l'inefficacité de certaines méthodes adaptées, lesquelles malgré toute bonne volonté des éducateurs, ne donnent que rarement escomptés. Par contre, tout ce qui est 'palpable', capte facilement l'attention des masses, d'où l'empirisme l'emporte sur le dogmatisme.*¹²⁰

Lumumba's surprising criticism leveled at his compatriots was that they tended to copy everything from the Whites, often copying the bad examples: "*En réalité, les Congolais profitent beaucoup plus des formes extérieurs de la civilisation européenne (façon de s'habiller... démarche, parure, etc.)*"¹²¹ His critique was aimed at the fact that true civilization pertained to a way of thinking and living and not to the "*formes extérieures et artificielles du matérialisme.*"¹²² There might have been an impression that Lumumba was endorsing European colonial prejudice against Africans. However, what Lumumba had in mind was twofold: His main concern was to build a hybrid society in which Black and White would live together, not as superior/inferior but as equal citizens. Secondly, Lumumba was

¹²⁰ The education that up to now had been available to the Congolese appears to be too prejudiced by abstract rules, which are not only foreign to the Bantu mentality, but are at times also beyond their understanding. This explains the precariousness and ineffectiveness of some of the methods adopted, which, despite the best intentions of the educators, rarely paid dividends. In contrast, that which is 'palpable' easily captures the attention of the masses, from where empiricism converts it to dogmatism.

¹²¹ In reality, the Congolese profit a great deal from the external forms of European civilization (way of dress, their bearing, attire, etc).

¹²² The external and artificial forms of materialism.

concerned by lack of vision and interpretation of the signs of the time on part of Congolese who preferred to copy rather than learn.

Lumumba deplored the absence of social and intellectual contact between the colonizer and the colonized. He wished to see a developed interracial contact around social activities, outside the formal contacts in the work place, at meetings and so on. He envisaged social cadres where people of all races would learn from one another and acquire a true sense of development: “*L’objectif principal de ces groupements ... devrait être orienté sur l’éducation sociale et civique des Blancs et des Africains ainsi que l’amélioration de leurs relations réciproques sous toutes les formes et dans les secteurs de la vie sociale*” (Lumumba 1962:120-121).¹²³ Not only would this vision foster interracial contacts, but it would, on the one hand, create a sense of humanity around the relationship between Belgians and Congolese, and on the other hand, it would achieve a sense of solidarity and mutual acceptance between Congolese themselves within their tribal groupings.

Among the other elements that Lumumba associated with equality were justice (Lumumba 1962: 81-98); the land (Lumumba 1962:105-118)¹²⁴ and the issue of nationality (Lumumba 1962:78-81). At that stage, the Congo had been annexed to Belgium since 1908 and according to Lumumba the Congolese had ceased to belong to any citizenry as a result of ambiguous formulation of Belgian law with regard to nationality. Lumumba referred specifically to the Belgian law of 1904 which stipulated: “*Tout indigène congolais, tant qu’il réside sur le territoire de l’Etat, conserve sa nationalité congolaise, est soumis aux lois de l’Etat et reste traité comme sujet de l’Etat...*”¹²⁵ However, when the annexation of the Congo took place in 1908, Congolese became Belgian citizen of colonial status as Lumumba

¹²³ The main objective of such groupings ... should be orientated toward the social and civic education of Whites and Africans, as well as the improvement of their reciprocal relations in all forms and in all aspects of social life.

¹²⁴ Regarding the issue of land, Lumumba’s concerns centred on the fact that more Europeans were coming to the country to occupy the land. All the good and large concessions were being grabbed by colonizers, not leaving much for Congolese remote chances of having any possibility to expand and develop.

¹²⁵ Every Congolese native, inasmuch as he resides in the state’s territory, retains his Congolese nationality, is subject to the laws of the state and is treated as a subject of the state....

observes: *il n'existe plus de nationalité congolaise, les ressortissants ont acquis la nationalité belge sans être citoyen belges; ils sont Belges de statut colonial.*¹²⁶

In effect the Congolese were neither Congolese nationals insofar as they lost their nationality during the annexation, nor were they fully Belgians, because they were not recognized by the law as such. He therefore came to the conclusion that the indigenous people of the Congo are in a way “*sans nationalité*”¹²⁷ (Lumumba 162:80). Therefore, Lumumba suggested that the Belgian government reconsider this law by granting the Congolese people their nationality (Lumumba 1962:81),¹²⁸ so that they can be equal to Belgians in dignity and in civil rights. Lumumba (1963:12) knew how vulnerable his country, faced with colonialism, imperialism, tribalism and religious separatism, was. Was he a prophet? Perhaps yes, but then he was a prophet without followers and honor at home.

To this day, Lumumba's vision remains but a dream and it will require a visionary to make it a reality. The speech he made at the occasion of the country's independence created a rift between him and the colonizer and alienated him from fellow tribal Congolese (Lumumba 1963:197-201; De Witte 2001:1-3; Dunn 2003:60-103). Those who particularly wanted to isolate him seized the occasion.¹²⁹ Expectations of Congolese and Africans in general were drowned in the currents of political events, both external and internal, that surrounded independence. International community's complicity contributed to Lumumba's fate from

¹²⁶ The Congolese nationality no longer exists, nationals have acquired Belgian citizenship without being Belgian citizens; they are Belgians of colonial status.

¹²⁷ Stateless.

¹²⁸ Although Lumumba advocated the cause of the Congolese, he actually meant the *évolués* or “African elites” who were not receiving equal treatment in the workplace and in other business.

¹²⁹ Dunn (2003:91-97) captured some of improper words with which Lumumba was described in the Western media during the last remaining months of his life in 1960. Capitalists in western governments accused Lumumba of communism (Lumumba 1963:197-201). In reaction, he said from his prison cell: «*Les puissances qui nous combattent ou qui combattent mon gouvernement, sous le prétexte fallacieux d'anti-communisme, cachent en réalité leurs véritables intentions. Ces puissances européennes ne veulent avoir de sympathies que pour des dirigeants africains qui sont à leur remorquent et qui trompent leur peuple*» (Those forces that are against us or against my government under the false pretext of anti-communism, in actual fact hide their real intentions. Those Europeans have sympathies only to African leaders who are their puppets and who cheat their people).

which there was no coming back. To this day his spirit haunts the torn-apart giant country, which has failed to integrate and achieve a sense of nationhood.

After Lumumba's death Che Guevara (1995:24-25) said that the "murder of Patrice Lumumba is an example of what the empire is capable of when the struggle against it is carried on" However, Che Guevara's disappointment lies therein that there was no solidarity within the country and eventually the struggle was lost. He prophetically predicted that "they lost it not just for a few years, but who knows for how many years!"¹³⁰ The theatre¹³¹ in early 1960s of international mobilization, UN and other international NGOs¹³² (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999b:50), African and Western countries' presence in DRC, forty-five years later, the scenario is still the same (Sarkin 2001:67-80; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:232-264; Baregu 2002:11-36; Malan & J G Porto 2004).

Jean Paul Sartre summarized the legacy of Lumumba (Lumumba 1963:i-xlv). In his remarks, Sartre (Lumumba 1963:xliv) says that Lumumba became a hero of pan-Africanism through his martyrdom and that "*son histoire a mis en lumière, pour tous, le lien profond de l'indépendance, de l'unité, et de la lutte contre les trusts.*"¹³³ In conclusion, he had reason to

¹³⁰ During my discussion with an old lady called Kesiya Namusarange in January 2005, she informed me that the Cubans used to tell the Banyamulenge in Nganja location in 1960s, that the battle they were fighting was a long journey of war. Their struggle was named after one of its leaders, Pierre Mulele, but the Cubans' pronounced it as "milele" which, in Swahili means an eternity. The implication being, that the children being born by then (in 1964-67), will fight in that war! Most of the current Banyamulenge politicians and soldiers, who fought in the 1996 war to this day, were born in 1960s (see section 3.7.2 below).

¹³¹ The failure of the Congo is a shared responsibility of the Congo and the international community – individual countries and the UN (see Dunn 2003:85-103). When Lumumba was in prison, he noticed the lack of will on the part of the UN to help solve the problem of the Congo. Lumumba (1963:390) said «*le colonialisme belge et ses alliés occidentaux qui ont trouvé des soutiens directs et indirects, délibérés et non délibérés, parmi certains hauts-fonctionnaires des Nations Unies, cet organisme en qui nous avons placé toute notre confiance lorsque nous avons fait appel à son assistance, ne l'ont jamais voulu*» (Belgian colonialism and its Western allies, which has found direct or indirect, deliberate or non-deliberate support from amongst top UN officials, this organization in which we placed all our confidence, when we called upon it, never wanted to [to help]). Forty-two years later Baregu (2002:26-27) notes the "UN is progressively losing credibility and legitimacy particularly among the smaller and weaker member states that feel that the principle of the sovereign equality of states is no longer the fundamental norm." In his speech to the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Che Guevara (1968:413-424) questioned the will and power of UN to establish peace under "the discredited flag."

¹³² Non-governmental organizations.

¹³³ [H]is history has highlighted for all, the profound link between independence, unity and the struggle against the trusts.

state that the battle for unity amounts to war: “*l’unité c’est la guerre.*”¹³⁴ Lumumba died, striving for three things (Lumumba 1963:394-398): (i) achieving national unity of the country by fighting and discouraging tribalism and racism; (ii) creation of a national economy which will improve the social conditions of the Congolese people; (iii) struggle against imperialism on the African soil and beyond (Lumumba 1963:9-12).

The Congo’s political architect could, however, not succeed in forging a national identity for the country – be that under king Leopold, under the Belgian government, or under the first independent government. What is still striking is the fact that neither Joseph Kasa-Vubu, or Desiré Mobutu, nor Laurent Desiré Kabila, had the charisma to build the nation on democratic principles, which would change the image of the Congo from the “heart of darkness” to the “heart of light”. Despite Mobutu’s introduction of multi-party democracy early in 1990 and the opening of the CSN¹³⁵ in August 1991 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1998:8), the country’s institutions continued to collapse. Would the multi-presidents’ project of the transitional government 2003-2005, under the banner of “national unity” have the capacity and the political will to make a difference, that which Congolese have been yearning for centuries? History alone remains the judge of that.

3.7 Banyamulenge national identity

3.7.1 Banyamulenge in the colonial period

In general, the relationship between the Banyamulenge and their neighbors was good. The tribes had developed a system of economic exchange and good neighborliness amongst all of them. The Banyamulenge were cattle keepers, while their neighbors lived on cultivating the land and on hunting. The Banyamulenge were the suppliers of cattle, milk and meat. In turn, their neighbors provided other forms of food: cassava, bananas, maize, beans. This exchange developed into proper economic ties and friendship (*ubgira*) with the person offering the goods being called *umwira* (a friend). The Bafuliru and Bavira would supply their

¹³⁴ That is unity means war.

¹³⁵ *Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (National Sovereign Conference)

Banyamulenge friends with certain goods (food or salt for cows) and in return the Banyamulenge would offer them cows, meat, milk, butter, sheep, goats and chickens. This exchange was called *gushigura* (see Gatimbirizo 1988:22).

Moreover, there were strong ties between members of different tribes, especially in case of the Bavira, Bafuliru and the Banyamulenge. These ties often resulting in blood pacts, known as *kunywana igihango*. Families involved therefore, became one family and one blood. And in this way, one could not harm the other or be in conflict with the other. However, in the event of domestic or local conflicts arising between the Banyamulenge and their immediate neighbors, elders from the opposing communities would sit together and settle issues as they shared a drink (*inzoga*). Fines were charged (*iciru*) according to the weight of the offense. This procedure was also followed when two members of the same community had differences.

The Banyamulenge were known as the Banyarwanda of the Congo or the Congolese Tutsi by their neighbors. This name did not bother the Banyamulenge until it became exploited and abused by politics of exclusion and confusion inherited from colonialism¹³⁶ to the post-independence period (Gatimbirizo 1988:25). History has it that the Banyamulenge had been part of local administrative entities before and during the colonial period (Kidogi 1985:16; Gatimbirizo 1988:18-32). In this regard Gatimbirizo states that, “*dans l’administration coloniale, c’est le décret du 6 octobre 1891 qui pour la première fois tenta une réglementation des institutions administratives. Certaines chefferies furent reconnues.*”¹³⁷ Two of these in the Uvira territory belonged to Banyamulenge chiefs, Kayira and Gahutu (Gatimbirizo 1988:26).

¹³⁶ According to Young and Turner (1985:233), under Belgian colonial rule, the local administration was categorized into and recognized as three types of native conscription: (i) Chieftaincy, a traditional unit whose chief is chosen according to traditional and customary law; (ii) *Secteur*, an artificial circumscription created by a fusion of several small traditional units; (iii) *Centre extra-coutumier*, it is also an artificial circumscription composed of Africans living outside their traditional units. This category mainly comprised those transplanted and working in the mines and in government administration.

¹³⁷ ... In the colonial administration, the decree of 6 October 1891 for the first time attempted to regulate the administrative institutions. Certain chieftaincies were thus recognized.

According to Kidogi (1985:22-32), the Banyamulenge strongly resisted the colonialist idea of land occupation, because of its impact on the survival of their livestock. Furthermore, they resisted being treated as colonial subjects. Thirdly, they resisted the exorbitant colonial taxes. Elsewhere, the Belgians imposed taxes on rubber collection (Slade 1962:177-178), while the Banyamulenge were forced to pay personal taxes (*ikori* or *umurambu*) as well as the tax imposed on their livestock. The system created resentment and in many cases the Banyamulenge were forced to provide false information pertaining to the exact size of their livestock, because the tax was based on the number of cattle.

Consequently and as a way of punishment, the Banyamulenge became victims of the colonial politics of divided and rule. Kidogi (1985:32) puts it as follows: “*Compte tenu de manque de soumission des Banyamulenge à l’égard du colonisateur, un processus de déstabilisation de ce peuple pasteur fut amorcé.*”¹³⁸ This resulted in the suppression of their traditional administrative entities – *chefferies* (Gatimbirizo 1988:26-27; Mutambo 1997:65-67; Koen 2002:502-503) – which later, in 1933, left the Banyamulenge without the control of any land, they could call their own. This amounted to the loss of traditional identity and subsequently, the loss of social and political identity. To quote Muyengeza,¹³⁹ one of few gifted Banyamulenge poets:

Baj’ amigobomba, (they came across)

Baje bakikiye Tanganika, (they came around the shores of [the lake] Tanganyika)

Bamirwa n’Isata (they were swallowed by a python)

Isanga n’ ibitigiri (it found them too [strong to bite/to crash]).

The poetry of Muyengeza was a form of resistance to and defiance towards the existing unjust, harsh and colonial rule. The most crucial part came when the colonial farmer known as Riga (Rugan) started to forcefully evict the Banyamulenge with their livestock from

¹³⁸ Due to lack of submission of the Banyamulenge towards the colonizer, a process of destabilization of this rural community was initiated.

¹³⁹ Muyengeza was one of the sub-chiefs under chief Kayira, and he supervised Kito (Cito) location about 20 km south of the town of Uvira.

Itombwe and Minembwe in the early 1950s, in order to convert the land into private concessions for cattle grazing (Kidogi 1985:27) under the ELIT¹⁴⁰ (Gatimbirizo 1988:54-55). As Young (2001:288) puts it, the “colonialists had taken from African people the history [and cultural values] that had hitherto been theirs.” At one point, chef Karojo led Banyamulenge men in what is known “*ichi ry’amabuye*” (a season of stone) to resist colonial land grabbing in Minembwe.¹⁴¹

After losing their *chefferies* (traditional leadership) linked to the land, the Banyamulenge were administratively represented by their neighbors (the Bifuliru, Bavira and/or Babembe) depending on locations they lived. They were gradually regarded as mere outsiders from Rwanda and Burundi (Muzuri 1983:140). According to Mboninkebe (1994:1-9), the Banyamulenge were victims of Belgian colonization in a number of ways, *inter alia*: they were seen as potential competitors in livestock farming, and they resisted colonial compulsory measures imposed on agriculture.

In 1924 Bigimba, the son of Kayira who succeeded his father as leader after the latter’s death, was relegated by the colonizer from Mulenge, in Uvira territory to Lulenge in Fizi territory, while Mukongabwe Mahina, a Bifuliru chief, would also be relegated to North-Kivu in 1930 (Gatimbirizo 1988:25). During Kayira’s reign he had sub-chiefs who represented him in different localities: Nyiriminege supervised at Gihanda; Nyirimuhanga at Mihanga; Rumamfura at Galye; Rwiyerekwa at Kavugwa and Rugarama; Muyengeza at Cito; and Bururu at Munanira. The colonial administration of 1891 (Gatimbirizo 1988:26) recognized several local administrative entities (*chefferies*). In the Luvungi sector, Uvira territory, the following were thus recognized: Lubisha (Barundi); Nyamugira (Bifuliru); Mugabo (Barundi); Gahutu (Banyamulenge); Kabwika (Bifuliru) and Lusaka (Bifuliru).

¹⁴⁰ *Elevage de l’Itombwe* (Itombwe farm).

¹⁴¹ The “season of stone” refers to the period when a colonial farmer known by local people as Matunguru, wanted to evict Banyamulenge from villages of Kwibereshi and Kabunga in Lukombe locality. Chef Karojo incited all other men to collect stones and throw them at the Belgian farmer and his men. Eventually the battle was won by Banyamulenge men.

There were also other Banyamulenge chiefs such as Budurege at Gishembwe, which will eventually expand to Bijombo under Muhasha the nephew of Budurege. This *groupement* Bijombo (local administrative entity) was the most controversial entity from mid 1970s to 1980s.

After misunderstanding rose between Mukongabwe Mahina (Bafuliru chief) and Banyamulenge at the end of 1910s and early 1920s, some Banyamulenge families relocated from Mulenge location to Lulimba in Fizi territory. In 1927, Rutambge became a chief until his death in 1931 (Gatimbirizo 1988:31). *Groupement* Muhire was another local administrative entity under Banyamulenge leadership since 1932 in Tulambo, Itombwe. However, the chief Muhire was evicted by the ELIT, a Belgian farm in 1952. He worked alongside with other Babembe and Banyamulenge local chiefs (Gatimbirizo 1988:53-58).

3.7.2 Banyamulenge and rebellion movements in postcolonial period

3.7.2.1 Uvira territory

Since independence the DRC has experienced many rebellions.¹⁴² The period of 1961-1968 was characterized by the political disintegration of the central government after the assassination of Lumumba; Kasa-Vubu's failure to hold the nation together and the complicity of western countries and the UN (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002: 106-118); the *coup d'état* of Mobutu in 1965 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:141-152); the secession wars in Katanga (Clarke 1968:79-83; Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999b:50-52; 2002:99-101) and in South Kasai (Clarke 1968:79; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002:106); insurrection and generalized war (Clarke 1968:79-91); and external political and military involvement of the Belgians, the Americans; and the UN (Dunn 2003:61-103; De Witte 2001:xxii).

Political and social chaos in the DRC resulted in constant killings, bloodshed and untold sorrow and misery of innocent people. Millions of survivors became displaced or were turned into refugees both within and outside the country. Allegation of cannibalism were

¹⁴² There have been about three major movements of rebellion in the DRC in 1961-1968, 1996-1997, and 1998-2003. All these rebellions had internal and external implications, and they have now left behind severe social-political and economic rift among local communities living in the eastern part more than in any other part of the country.

no longer a colonial insult, but became a reality in certain parts of the country.¹⁴³ Tribal and ethnic hatred, political wrangles and external economic and political involvement (Baregu 2001:11-39) has all contributed to the Congo failure to become a respected, viable and developed nation over the last forty five years.

The rebellion of 1964 in South Kivu turned from a national perspective into banditry, pillage and ethnic animosity. Leaders of the rebellion in South Kivu recruited youths “*jeunesse*,”¹⁴⁴ mainly from the Bafuliru and Babembe communities. The warriors were inspired by the magic and supernatural “powers” of an immortal bath, known as the *Mayi-Mayi* (water-water).¹⁴⁵ During the early stages of the rebellion led by Soumialot, Jean Pierre Mulele and Kabila, some of the Banyamulenge youth briefly enrolled in the movement in the interest of protecting their families and their livestock. Unfortunately, instead of concentrating on the issue of unity, the Banyamulenge’s cattle soon became a target of the rebels’ envy.

At first, they imposed taxes on the population that were mostly payable in the form of cattle. Later, they started to grab cattle in raids. The Banyamulenge were forced to protect their cattle from the raids and pillaging, resulting in fighting breaking out and the rebellion turned against the Banyamulenge. At the time, the Banyamulenge had no political affiliation with any government or rebellion leadership, be it from within or outside the country. As Clarke (1968:84) explains, the rebellion, notwithstanding the help of mercenaries and support received from different socialist countries and the presence of Che Guevera, lacked political and military organization.

¹⁴³ In Ituri and North Katanga conflicts.

¹⁴⁴ The term the Banyamulenge used to refer to *jeunesse* was *Abajenesi*, which also meant for them “enemies”.

¹⁴⁵ The practice and the name of Mayi-Mayi took a popular turn with the war of 1996, especially during the anti-Tutsi campaign (see Hans 2004:223). Youths of different tribes were instrumentalized by Kabila government and other anti-Banyamulenge and anti-Rwanda individuals and institutions in South and North Kivu provinces. The term is borrowed from Tanzanian fighters against colonialism and spread in the Eastern DRC. The fighters would take a ritual bath allegedly to protect them from death.

When Soumialot announced the policy of the CNL¹⁴⁶ in Uvira, he said that the objectives of the movement were to bring peace, reform the economy and re-establish democracy, and freedom of all Congolese and foreigners (Verghaegen 1966:134; cf Gatimbirizo 1988:34). But these political aims, found Bafuliru context already disintegrated by internal leadership conflict between Henri Simba and Moïse Marandura in 1961. In 1964, under the ANC's¹⁴⁷ military command, Colonel Mulamba gained victory against the rebels in the Plain of Ruzizi and Uvira town which sent the rest of rebels into mountains of Uvira and Fizi territory.

It was by this time, especially in 1966, that the ANC had established contact with the Banyamulenge people, recruiting a good number of its youths and it distributed weapons to them, not only to defend themselves and their properties, but also to defend the country. The Banyamulenge youth established their own militia known as *Abagiriye*,¹⁴⁸ which collaborated with ANC against the rebellion in Uvira, Fizi and Minembwe territories. The surviving rebel leader Kabila's last stronghold in Hewa Bora in the forest west of Minembwe, was eventually destroyed in 1975 by a contingent of the FAZ¹⁴⁹ referred to by the Banyamulenge as *Abapara*, while the remaining rebel factions led by Zabuloni and Ndalo were finally crushed by the FAZ early in the 1980s in the Fizi territory near Uvira. Zabuloni, however, reemerged during the Mayi-Mayi campaign in 1998.

After the rebellion in Uvira was crushed, Soumialot and Kabila established their base in the Fizi region, where they had the support of Che Guevara, Cubans and a group of Rwandan Tutsis led by Mudandi (Guevara 2000:30-33, 42-68), who had lost their battle against the Hutus in 1959. Simba and his youth wing, the *Abajenesi*, retreated into the mountains of Uvira, where they clashed with the *Abagiriye* who were protecting their families and cattle. One of the Banyamulenge leaders, Mushishi was killed during the fighting in Gafinda in

¹⁴⁶ *Comité National de Libération* (National Committee of Liberation) was a coalition of different political parties, which waged war against the central government. These included the MNC/Lumumba, BALUBAKAT, and others (see Gatimbirizo 1988:33-34).

¹⁴⁷ *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (Congolese National Army).

¹⁴⁸ The term comes from French *guerrier*, which means warrior.

¹⁴⁹ *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (Zairean Armed Forces).

October 1965. Confusion ensued and people started fleeing in different directions, with people being killed and cattle pillaged. Those who survived made their way to the Plain of Ruzizi where they took cover under the protection of the ANC (Verhaegen & Libois 1966:399; cf Muzuri 1983:102; Gatimbirizo 1988:38; Mutambo 1997:82-86). In the villages of Kirumba, Katongo and Rukombe, many Banyamulenge were executed in churches. Among them was the evangelist Yohana Nyabuhuga who, along with his 17 church members, were executed at Kirumba in Bijombo location in 1966.

Abagiriye who voluntarily fought alongside the ANC, were soon armed and engaged the rebellion faction led by General Ndalo, Colonel Zabuloni and adjutant Kibirigi. Mwunvira Rupande led the side the Banyamulenge were serving on. Others who led groups in various locations were, among others, Muhindanyi, Norbert Gakingiye, Elias Gahungu; Jerome Cunguti; Gacherehwa Rurinda (Gatimbirizo 1988:40). The *Abagiriye* gained the upper hand in the rebellion, making it possible for their families to re-occupy their homes in Minembwe territory. Militarily the war was won, but animosity and tribal hatred, which later were to be exploited by the government of Mobutu, remained a struggle that would yield no winner. Despite enormous contribution of the Banyamulenge warriors in the war against rebellion, and the enrollment of many others in the national army, even after the war, the Banyamulenge were rarely, if ever, recognized as sons and daughters of the land by national politics.

3.7.2.2 Fizi territory

Imana y'Inganja (God of Nganja) is the common slogan of many Banyamulenge church people. Nganja is located in the collectivity of Tanganyika, Fizi territory southwest of Fizi town and not far from the border post of Force Bendersa, Kalemie in Katanga province. As the Banyamulenge trekked through the countryside with their livestock after having been chased from Minembwe and Itombwe by the ELIT colonial farm, part of the community ended up in Nganja. According to Damari Nansuhuzwa,¹⁵⁰ a Belgian farmer, whom she only identified as Rezimo, told Rumenge, one of the Banyamulenge chiefs about Nganja as being

¹⁵⁰ She is a widow of chief Rumenge, who led the way for members of the Banyamulenge people who settled in Nganja in 1955-1956. Interaction with her was carried out in March 2004 in Uvira.

a good locality for grazing. The Banyamulenge thereupon made Nganja their home for the period 1956-57.

The Banyamulenge made contact with their Babembe neighbors through Rumenge and through local churches. Nganja was made up of the following villages: Gipimo, Mirari, Mizinga, Kabiki, Gakurwe, Ruhemba, Gateja, Rugarama I & II, Kajoka and Kirumba. Each village had a local chief (*Gapita*) also known as *ikirongozi*¹⁵¹ and a small church. There were only two church denominations represented: the Catholic Church and the British Assemblies of God.¹⁵² From time to time, during the dry season when the Banyamulenge would move away from their villages and locations to find grazing elsewhere, they paid tributes in the form of cattle to the local Babembe chiefs.

Nganja had an interesting structure as it is shown in the table below. Rumenge was the chief of the entire Nganja location; church elder Samuel Semutobo supervised all the Assemblies of God local churches; Lay leader Rugubira Venasi supervised the Catholic Church; while Simoni Miringito and Yonazari Makangata supervised all prayer (intercessory) teams.

Village	Local chief	Church leader	Prayer team leader
Gipimo	Joseph Matenga	Simoni Sebitereko	Simon Miringito, Magadalena Nyabasenga, Aburhamu Burangi and Zakayo Ntihakose,
Mirari	Rumenge Mvubikira	Bujanja Evariste	Zakariya Barita & Karaudi Rwihaniza
Kabara	Ndeberi Mbonyi	Rugubira/ Sebitereko	
Mizinga	Gatware Mugaza	Amosi Nyarungwangwa	Simoni Kaneza & Erisha Kabojo
Kabiki	Rumenge Nvubikira	Evariste Bujanja	Donato Ruchakira & Rabani Segabiro
Ruhemba	Ruhorana Basaza	Zabuloni Kamburishi	Filemoni Semayombe &

¹⁵¹ The word comes from the Swahili *kiongozi* meaning a leader.

¹⁵² See next section 3.7.4.

			Yoheri Kizeze
Gakurwe	Rwiyamirira Sebasaza	Aburhamu Ndabagoyi	Sadoki Sebasonera & Madam Sofia Nyabitebo
Gateja	Gapfunda	Sefania Sekaruba	Paskari Bitorwa
Kirumba	Rubona		
Rugarama I	Ntagawa Mahinga	Samuel Semutobo	Rubeni Munyangurube
Rugarama II	Rupiya	Lazaro Rusimbi	Simoni Biberebere & Ndereya Rushema
Kajoka	Ntagawa	Samuel Bunduki	Inoki Mberwa & Magayane

During the rebellion, Nganja was affected but not in the same way with Minembwe and Bijombo, although its context was equally precarious.¹⁵³ According to Pastor Simon Sebitereko,¹⁵⁴ who was an elder in the church at Gipimo village, the protection of Nganja was from the “hand of God.” Because, Nganja was, in actual fact, in the rebel controlled area which made it a direct target of the Congolese National Army. Secondly, Banyamulenge cows became a target from rebels who desperately needed them for food. Thirdly, in Ngandja, the Banyamulenge did not have *Abagiriye* to protect them.¹⁵⁵ Thus the community was helpless and its future depended on God’s protection. In this helpless context, local church leaders and intercessors planned, what one of them called a “divine protection”¹⁵⁶ around Nganja. Local chiefs consulted with local church leaders on every social and political matter that engaged the community.

The presence of Che Guevara and the Cuban mercenaries in Fizi had imposed a more disciplined influence on Congolese rebellion in the area. They did not exploit people, kill

¹⁵³ Discussions carried out in 1999-2004 with various pastors, elders and women who lived in Nganja.

¹⁵⁴ He shares his view with a number of other people such as pastors Nduwamahoro Mihingano, Zakayo Mugabe, Samson Mingaringari, Zabuloni Kambulishi, Mr Zakayo Ntihakose, Madam Kesiya Namusarange, Madam Julia Naruragira, Madam Damari Nansuhuzwa, pastors Tito Gatako, and pastor Zabuloni Kamburishi among others.

¹⁵⁵ Unlike their brothers in Minembwe and Uvira, Banyamulenge in Nganja were prohibited to own or possess a gun. God allegedly told them that He would protect them.

¹⁵⁶ This was through a discussion with pastor Inoki Mberwa in March 2004.

civilians and did not hold them to ransom. The presence of Rwandan mercenaries led by Mundandi in the ranks of Guevara within the rebellion of Kabila, had to some extent also contributed to the protection of the Banyamulenge. Although the Banyamulenge paid *iposho*¹⁵⁷ to the rebels (and later to soldiers) from time to time, the Cubans would regularly come and buy cattle for food (Guevara 2000:22-23).¹⁵⁸ Kabila's army men initially followed the example of the Cubans, but when they lost the battle, they started to acquire cows on credit¹⁵⁹ but which were never paid back.

The villages of Nganja were bombarded by government forces, but did not suffer heavy casualties.¹⁶⁰ As the national army was winning its battle against the rebels, it eventually controlled Nganja location. When the soldiers reached the Banyamulenge villages, chief Rumenge welcomed them and gave them *izimano*.¹⁶¹ Soldiers who were under the impression that the Banyamulenge were collaborating with the rebels, were surprised by the warm welcome. After the defeat of the rebellion and after Cubans and Rwandan mercenaries had left, Kabila and his men became more hostile towards the Banyamulenge. Anti-personal mines were spread in various areas around villages and at one time, two women going to the market were killed and six others wounded.

In 1968, through a prophecy, the Banyamulenge were told to move from Nganja to Minembwe. Those who obeyed and who left immediately arrived in Minembwe safely. But those who postponed were told that they would reach Minembwe with difficulty. By then

¹⁵⁷ A local collection of food items for rebels or soldiers. It was normally done once a week at the end of the week.

¹⁵⁸ Che Guevara describes Nganja through his experience as "a group of hamlets each numbering no more than ten huts lay scattered over a huge area of natural pasture. The cluster of settlements, known by the general name Nganja, is inhabited by a tribe that originally came from Rwanda.... In the course of the war, this proximity enabled us from time to time to avail ourselves of the precious beef that is a cure-almost-even for homesickness". However, Che Guevara's estimation of villages' composition is underestimated. There were big villages with more than hundred hamlets, such as Gipimo and Rugarama. The rest were around fifty and above. Those with ten were fewer.

¹⁵⁹ The rebels used to say as Banyamulenge elders recall "*muduhe inka Kabila azishura*" (give us cows [on credit], Kabila will pay [once he wins the war]).

¹⁶⁰ In one occasion, bombardments killed dozens of cows and wounded not more than three people.

¹⁶¹ A package that the host gives to his honoured guests is called *izimano*. This would typically include, cattle, goat, food, milk, etc.

conditions were unsafe because of rebel activity and they had to wait for an intervention from *Abagiriye* who came from Minembwe to help. During this exodus two persons lost their lives and cattle were slaughtered by rebels as they clashed with the *Abagiriye*¹⁶². Finally, from 1969-1971 all the Banyamulenge families were once again re-united. Once again, they spread their villages from Minembwe to Mulenge.

3.7.2.3 Rebellions of 1996 and 1998

Thirty years later, in 1996, another rebellion led by Laurent Desiré Kabila, initially supported by youths among them from the Banyamulenge community and backed by Rwanda and many other countries in Africa and abroad, started in South Kivu (Mutambo 1997:108-119; cf Ruhimbika 2001:55). Many youths, known as *kadogo*¹⁶³ from many tribes joined the rebellion. Due to harassment by Zairean government and the community's bleak future, the Banyamulenge youths¹⁶⁴ were recruited by the RPF¹⁶⁵ between 1995 and 1996, which later on would fight a war against Mobutu.

After the victory of the RPF in Rwanda, many Banyamulenge families opted to go to Rwanda, mainly to look for safety and jobs¹⁶⁶ and not necessarily, because they felt that Rwanda was their home. Young Banyamulenge politicians emerged, among others there were: Bizima Karaha,¹⁶⁷ Moïse Nyarugabo,¹⁶⁸ Benjamin Serukiza,¹⁶⁹ Azarias Ruberwa,¹⁷⁰ and Thadée

¹⁶² The defeat of Kabila was explained by the *Abagiriye* in terms of a lack of brave men. Today, it is an expression in the Banyamulenge saying "*Kabila iyari nawe ngo afite abasoda!*" The expression means "do not foul yourself".

¹⁶³ *Kadogo* is a Swahili term that means small and refers to young people and minors who joined the armed groups. The term was taken over from the Ugandan and Rwandan rebellions in the 1980's and 1990's respectively.

¹⁶⁴ This exercise did not enjoy the consent of all the Banyamulenge people. It was a deal between RPF agents and the youths. It was not only Banyamulenge youths who were recruited but youths from others tribes also joined because they were either related or out of sympathy.

¹⁶⁵ Rwandan Patriotic Front.

¹⁶⁶ Thousands of Congolese from different tribes went to Rwanda in search of jobs.

¹⁶⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs in the AFDL government 1997-1998.

¹⁶⁸ Director General (*Directeur de cabinet*) of President Kabila's office during the war. As soon as they reached Kinshasa, Nyarugabo was dumped. Later in 1997-1998, he was appointed to head the office of restitution, known as the *Office de Biens Mal Acquis* (OBMA).

Mutare.¹⁷¹ Kabila and the AFDL received a great deal of support from the region as well as from outside the region. This insurrection of 1996 had both an internal and a regional dimension to it, due to the collapse of Mobutu's dictatorship and the political and military implications thereof in the neighboring countries of Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda¹⁷² (see Reyntjens 1998:10; McNulty 1999:72-80; Mamdani 1999:53-63; Dunn 2003:140).

The rebellion was undertaken in the hope of establishing a responsible government that would restore justice and viable socio-political and economic institutions, which in turn would enhance democracy and development in the country and ensure a viable relationship with neighboring countries. The main reason for Banyamulenge involvement in the rebellion was the discriminative policies of the past that were based on ethnic differences.

Repercussions of the genocide in Rwanda and the civil war in Burundi affected the Banyamulenge in the region, especially with the influx of refugees, among them extremist Hutus, Interahamwe¹⁷³ and former Rwandan army soldiers (see McNulty 1999:71-76; Sarkin 2001:70-71; Nzongola-Ntalaja-Ntalaja 2002:224-225; Dunn 2003:143-144, ICG 2003, 2001).

At one stage between 1995 and September 1996, traveling became a crime for Banyamulenge.¹⁷⁴ Many members of the Banyamulenge community were imprisoned,

¹⁶⁹ Vice Governor of South-Kivu province from November 1996 to June 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Director General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997-1998.

¹⁷¹ Mayor of Bukavu from November 1996 to 2000.

¹⁷² On two different occasions, on 18th and 25th of April 1996, Mr Shweka Mutabazi, the District Commissioner of Uvira said that as long as there is an ethnic problem in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, the Banyamulenge would have no peace in the DRC (Zaire). See Letter of Ndatabaya Rukenuwa, the Chairman of Banyamulenge Mutuality in Uvira to the Minister of Home Affairs dated 26 August 1996; Memorandum of the Banyamulenge Mutuality of Uvira to the Minister of Home Affairs, dated 5 October 1995 in which they express concern for their security in the region.

¹⁷³ An extremist Hutu armed group that committed genocide in Rwanda.

¹⁷⁴ Dugu wa Mulenge, mentioned here above, was deported because he had traveled from Uvira to Bujumbura. See M Gakoko, et al (Banyamulenge Local Chiefs), Letter to the Minister of Home Affairs in Kinshasa, Bijombo 20 March 1995. The local chiefs protested against measures taken by the Governor of South-Kivu prohibiting all Banyamulenge to travel to Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania for whatever reason. Furthermore, he instructed immigration services to confiscate Zairean identification cards from those who would cross the borders. He is quoted as stating in his letter of 1 December 1994, «*A tout celui qui traverserait les frontières*

harassed, arrested, tortured,¹⁷⁵ killed and deported (Rukundwa 1996, Amnesty International: AFR 62/13/96) to Rwanda and Burundi, while their Zairean identification cards were confiscated or destroyed;¹⁷⁶ their rights of ownership of cattle, houses, lands were violated.¹⁷⁷ On 1 December 1993 and on 25 February 1994, the Banyamulenge Mutuality of Uvira wrote letters to the District Commissioner informing him of the insecurity, harassment and assault by Burundian refugees the community was subject to. He only acknowledged receipt of their letters on 1 March 1994. Even then, no measures were taken to protect the community from violence.¹⁷⁸ It is during this time, particularly in 1995, that the Parliament established a commission, led by Vangu Mabweni, to identify foreigners in North and South Kivu provinces. Upon completion of its work, a report known as the *Rapport Vangu*¹⁷⁹ was submitted to Parliament.

de l'Est (Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzanie), pour n'importe quel motif doit obligatoirement déposer les pièces d'identité à la douane et ne doit plus rentrer au pays.» Banyamulenge chiefs pronounced these declarations as “*anarchique ... et anticonstitutionnelle*” (anarchy and unconstitutional).

¹⁷⁵ See Roberto Garreton, Special Rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission “Report on the situation of human rights in Zaire no E/CN.4/1996/66, 29 January 1996; Lucie Budederi et al, Letter written by a group of Banyamulenge women to the Governor of South-Kivu in protest of their arbitrary arrest by the District Commissioner of Uvira, 11 January 1996; *Ligue des Droits de la Personne dans la Région de Grands Lacs* (LDGL), Press Release, 10 January 1996; Attorney M Lubala, letter to the General Prosecutor on 28 November 1995; Heritiers de la Justice, Letter to the Governor of South Kivu in protest of arbitrary arrests of Ruhimbika, Madaga and Rukunurwa in Uvira, 28 November 1995; Letter by Attorneys L Chihanza and S Bukulu to the District Commissioner of Uvira, 13 January 1996; Letter of Mavua Mudima, Minister of National Defense to the Banyamulenge Community, 22 July 1995.

¹⁷⁶ Letter of protest by Ntakiruta Mujandwa et al , members of the *Union des Démocrates Indépendants* (UDI) to the President of the UDI against the deportation of Dugu wa Mulenge, a former member of the Provincial Assembly, 4 April 1995. In an Amnesty International statement quoted by IRIN no 27, 16-26 September 1996, some 217 Banyamulenge members were expelled from Uvira to Rwanda by Zairean authorities. It states “there is no justification for this calculated abuse of human rights – including unlawful killings, disappearances, severe beatings, and deportation or *refoulement* to another country.” The Vice-Governor of South-Kivu, Mr Lwabanji Lwasi had issued a statement in Bukavu, on 6 September 1996, in which all members of the Banyamulenge were urged to leave Zaire within six days.

¹⁷⁷ See letter of Mr Shweka Mutabazi no 5072/438/C671/95 instructing *inventaire des parcelles et terrains sis à Uvira appartenant aux Rwandais et Burundais*, in which Banyamulenge were included; Letter from the Banyamulenge Mutuality in Uvira to the Minister of Home Affairs, 5 October 1995 in which the Banyamulenge signatories object to the conduct of the District Commissioner towards the Banyamulenge community in Uvira.

¹⁷⁸ See Gasore & Munyakazi, 29 November 1995. Letter of the Banyamulenge Mutuality of Kinshasa to the Prime Minister, denouncing the Vangu Report.

¹⁷⁹ See contra, Letter by Nyarugabo, Gatimbirizo & Muhoza on behalf of the Banyamulenge Mutuality in Lubumbashi to Parliament, 14 November 1995; Letter of the Banyamulenge Mutuality of Kinshasa to Parliament, 26 April 1995; Letter from the Banyamulenge Mutuality in Kinshasa to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Zaire, 29 November 1995; Letter by S Rwakabuba, et al, representatives of Tutsi Communities in Kinshasa to the President of the Republic of Zaire, 10 July 1995.

As a result, Congolese of Rwandan and Burundian origin came to be regarded as foreigners. But according to reaction from the media and from other institutions, Banyamulenge and other affected communities of Rwandan and Burundian origin, questioned the impartiality of the commission. Others criticized it by saying that the commission was a pure instrument of tribalism¹⁸⁰ instigated by the then Speaker of the Parliament,¹⁸¹ Mr. Anzuluni Bembe¹⁸² and many other Members of Parliament from the Kivus who shared the same spirit of hatred.¹⁸³

Thousands of them were massacred in many parts of the country, not only because of the generalized war, but also because of their ethnic belonging, particularly in South-Kivu and North-Kivu provinces¹⁸⁴ (African Rights, 1997:21-23; Sarkin 2001:70-72). Pastors and Priests from Protestant and Catholic churches were executed in Luberizi (*Integrated Regional Information Network - IRIN*, 22-27 September 1996) and among them were: Pastor Elia Bugunzu, Provincial Representative of the Assemblies of God in South-Kivu along with

¹⁸⁰ See B Chamira, Le gouvernement Kongo doit interdire Anzuluni de provoquer les Banyamulenge, *Palmares* 8 mars 1996, p 5; N N Mangala, Executive Secretary of Solidarité – Kivu, letter to Président de la Commission de Suivi, Rapport Vangu, 26 février 1996; M Kikoko, “Le Sud-Kivu entre le feu et le sang. Les Babembe acceptent-ils de payer les lourds tribus de l’épuration ethnique qui leur serait imposée par l’homme venu d’ailleurs?” *La Dépêche Africaine* 24 septembre 1993, p 6.

¹⁸¹ Referring to the Parliament of the transitional government in the early 1990s when Mobutu introduced multi-party politics. It was formally known as the “High Council of the Republic – Transitional Parliament” (*Haut Conseil de la République – Parlement de Transition*, HCR-PT).

¹⁸² In one of his speeches during his trip to Uvira and Fizi (his homeland), Anzuluni said to his tribesmen that the resolution of 28 April 1995 was his initiative (see Letter of the Banyamulenge Mutuality in Uvira to the Minister of Home Affairs in Kinshasa, Uvira 5 October 1995 in which the Banyamulenge signatories object to the behavior of the District Commissioner vis-à-vis the Banyamulenge community in Uvira: *j’ai tout fait pour que cette résolution salutaire pour vous (Babembe). Les Banyamulenge sont désormais des réfugiés comme les autres [Rwandais et Burundais]. Et pour cela ils doivent quitter notre pays après le 31/12/1995. C’est l’occasion où jamais pour vous enrichir. Réveillez-vous maintenant et profitez de leur départ en vous emparant de leurs vaches non plus en les mangeant comme vous l’avez fait en 1964.*”) (I fought for this salutary resolution on your (Bembe) behalf. The Banyamulenge are now refugees like others [Rwandans and Burundians]. Therefore, they must leave our country after 31/12/1995. It is an opportunity for you to get rich. Weak up now and benefit of their departure and take their cows not to eat them again as you did in 1964).

¹⁸³ According to Moïse Nyarugabo (currently an MP in the transitional government), Vangu apologized to Banyamulenge in December 1997 and admitted that Anzuluni Bembe and other MPs from Kivu provinces tampered with his report.

¹⁸⁴ Letter of the Banyamulenge Mutuality to the District Commissioner of Uvira, 31 March 1994; S Rwakabuba, et al 1997, Letter to the President of the Republic of Zaïre; M Gakoko et al 20 March 1995. They objected to harassment, arrests, rape, extortion and killings of civilians by local authorities in the Uvira and Fizi districts in complicity with Hutu extremists (see also N Rukunurwa 29 November 1996).

his pastors Zabuloni Muzuzi, Zakariya Semutobo, Rev. Rukema Rushengererwa of the Free Methodist church with his three children were killed in Baraka and Pastor Yohana Kashaje, Mr. Rukenurwa Ndatabaya, the chairman of Banyamulenge council of elders along with many other men were executed at the Kamanyola military post.

Thousands of Banyamulenge lost their lives in the massacres and selected killings countrywide, based on ethnic differences preached by the government of Mobutu¹⁸⁵. It must also be understood that ethnic hatred in the Eastern Congo was exacerbated by the presence of the Interahamwe and extremist Hutus from Rwanda and Burundi who enjoyed the support of the Mobutu government. Poor political leadership, based on tribal and ethnic discrimination, genocide committed in Rwanda in 1994, the assassination of a Hutu President in Burundi and civil war since 1993 have contaminated the region with tribal hatred. Thousands of innocent Congolese people, Rwandan and Burundian refugees lost their lives as a result of wars in the Great Lakes Region.

The war of 1998, which divided the region and the international community, did not spare the Banyamulenge community. Selfish interests dominated the AFDL government. Misunderstandings between Kabila and his allies both on regional and international levels, were political and economic (Baregu 2002:11-39) for which unfortunately, the Banyamulenge had to pay another heavy price with their lives. In major towns manhunts were launched against Banyamulenge and other Tutsis¹⁸⁶ who were killed, lynched or thrown into rivers.

The armed conflict from May-June 2004 in Bukavu and its environs is another good example of the hatred. The armed and political strife for control over South Kivu between the PPRD and the RCD resulted in a war which turned against Banyamulenge and other

¹⁸⁵ Nzongola-Ntalaja (1999a:6) quoting McGreal of *Mail and Guardian* explaining the xenophobic campaigns against Tutsis in South-Kivu and says “Statements broadcast by South Kivu governor Kyembwa wa Lumona and his deputy [Lwabanji] Lwasi were, according to McGreal, “remarkably similar to the extremist Hutu messages broadcast during the Rwandan genocide”; N Rukenurwa, et al 5 October 1995.

¹⁸⁶ Those from other tribes who physically resembled Banyamulenge/Tutsi became victims too.

Tutsi civilians living in Bukavu.¹⁸⁷ Refugees who had fled from Uvira, the Plain of Ruzizi were among those who sought refuge in Burundi. On 13 August 2004, at least 160 Banyamulenge refugees were massacred in Gatumba by a regional coalition of anti-Tutsi groups¹⁸⁸ led by the FNL.¹⁸⁹

3.7.3 Politics of discrimination in the postcolonial period

When the Banyamulenge resisted colonial rule, it was a crime, and they were taxed into insubordination. When their youth collaborated with the government of Kinshasa in the 1960s to fight the rebellion and insurrection in the eastern provinces, they were accused of complicity and were brandished as traitors. Their act of defending the nation became a crime in the eyes of local politicians. To belong to a Tutsi ethnic group, which in any event was not by choice, became a crime. Thirty years later, when the Banyamulenge youths joined forces with other compatriots in 1996 to fight and topple a dictatorial regime, it became a crime! While Laurent Kabila, the leader of the rebellion movement - AFDL, was hailed as a “nationalist”, Banyamulenge youths within the movement were treated as traitors and foreigners. When insurrection erupted as a result of a misunderstanding between Kabila and his political god-fathers (in Rwanda and Uganda) in 1998, Kabila’s government treated the Banyamulenge as “vermin”¹⁹⁰ which resulted in their massacre. How then could the Banyamulenge in such a hostile environment give expression to their nationalism?

¹⁸⁷ This was on the ground that dissident soldiers, Colonel Mutebutsi and General Laurent Nkunda, were Tutsis, while the provocation came from General Mbudja Mabe on instruction of President Kabila to arrest one of the RCD soldiers, Major Kasongo, without the consent of his Deputy Presidents and particularly from the RCD President Ruberwa.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations Operation in Burundi’s Press Release: ONUB/PIO/PR/28/2004 on 14 August 2004; First report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Burundi: S /2004/682 on 25 August 2004; Letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council: S /2004/715 on 3 September 2004; See contra UN Report of Investigation to the Security Council s/2004/821 of 18 October 2004; Human Rights Watch (septembre 2004).

¹⁸⁹ *Front National de Libération* (“National Liberation Front”).

¹⁹⁰ In August 1998 Yerodia Ndombasi, one of the current Vice-Presidents in the transitional government, referred to the Banyamulenge as “vermin” and incited the rest of Congolese population to kill them. At that stage he was the Director General in the Office of President Kabila. On 11 April 2000, a Belgian court issued an international arrest warrant for Yerodia who by then was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The warrant was nullified by an International Court of Justice on the grounds of diplomatic immunity (see International Court of Justice 2002). However, justice must prevail. In a similar instance, Shweka Mutabazi, the District Commissioner of Uvira, said on 18 August, 1995, to a Christian gathering in Uvira that the Banyamulenge were snakes and

Although the Banyamulenge were initially called Rwandans it had not been a reason to evict them from their land or to kill them. However, due to a lack of responsible government, the instruments that were supposed to ensure peace and protection of people's rights and properties, such as police and parliament, were abused and turned against its citizens. Since the beginning of the rebellion in 1960s, the relationship between the Banyamulenge and their neighbors deteriorated, mostly due to political incitement.

Two major situations came into play: One is the suppression of the Banyamulenge's local administrative entities (*chefferies*). The second, being the contestation of their citizenship. In general, local populations in rural areas enjoyed tranquility and mutual support of peasant life, until the 1980s, when things changed again. However, the unfortunate situation of the rebellion created awareness among the Banyamulenge to venture into the modern world and to build other mechanisms for their socio-economic and political survival.

As early as 1969, immediately after the rebellion, local politicians from the Bafuliru and Babembe had begun to contest the Banyamulenge nationality. In contrast to their motives, the Governor of Kivu, Mr. Takizala instructed the then Sub-Regional Commissioner in Uvira to the effect that the Banyamulenge community was recognized as founding member of the CFS¹⁹¹. When national identity cards were issued, the issue of Banyamulenge identity was again disputed by local politicians, and in his reaction, the Governor¹⁹² of Kivu, Citoyen¹⁹³ Ndebo Akanda Dinekenza confirmed that the Banyamulenge were Zairean natives.¹⁹⁴ In 1979,

invaders "*serpents envahisseurs*" and called upon other tribes to kill them (see N Rukunurwa, Lettre au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 26 août 1996.

¹⁹¹ In the letter no 212-2220-054-AIC from Takizala, Governor of Kivu to the District Commissioner, dated 16 June 1969, he said [*les Banyamulenge*] *d'Itombwe sont parmi les ethnies fondatrices de l'E.I.C. et il sont Congolais d'origine*" ([The Banyamulenge] of Itombwe are among founding tribes of the CFS and are of Congolese origin).

¹⁹² *Commissaire de Région* (Regional Commissar).

¹⁹³ This appellation, which means "citizen", had replaced the title of Mister in 1971 as part of Mobutu's authenticity philosophy.

¹⁹⁴ Official message no 01/824/OKP/CAB/REG.COM/73 of the *Commissaire de Région* to the *Commissaire Sous-Régional* at Uvira, on 17 September 1973.

during the process of rehabilitating traditional chieftaincy of the Banyamulenge, the *mwami*¹⁹⁵ Lenge III of the Bavira collectivity, protested against the decision of government. In his letter of objection, he stated that the Banyamulenge had settled in his constituency between the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.¹⁹⁶

In the 1972¹⁹⁷, the Honorable Muhoza Gisaro was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP), for the Uvira district. Gisaro was popular, not only among the Banyamulenge, but also among other tribes in Uvira, especially the Bafuliru and the Bavira that also voted for him. He promoted cohabitation and reconciliation among all communities. He gave a voice and representation to the Banyamulenge community.

During the time of Gisaro as the MP, the issue of nationality did not surface at local level, as he played his role to ensure that the matter was dealt with at a higher level. However, his leadership was cut short with his death in a mysterious car accident. Before his sudden death, he had reintroduced the traditional administrative entity, *collectivité de hauts plateaux d'Itombwe* (collectivity of high plateaus of Itombwe). According to Muzuri (1983:112; cf Gatimbirizo 1988:43-46), the project of a traditional entity for the Banyamulenge was already in place by October 1966 in the form of a sub-locality under the leadership of Obedi Sebasonera.

Although tribal politicians and local chiefs from other tribes would agree to have a local entity, they feared the Banyamulenge's autonomy and influence. When the Bijombo sub-

¹⁹⁵ The Swahili word for local chief.

¹⁹⁶ Letter no 5072/132/1979/F03/MCD/70 dated 6 June 1979 (quoted in Gakoko, et al 1995).

¹⁹⁷ During the early days of Mobutu's regime, the issue of ethnicity and rights to land changed several times. At first, as Young and Turner (1985:149-163, 232-240) observe, Mobutu de-ethnicized his politics, although ethnicity was a political asset that politicians would like to use for social and political gains. Between 1967 and 1969, in terms of law 69/012 of 12 March 1969, the succession to local traditional leadership (chieftaincy) was replaced by the election of chiefs who served a five year term. Mobutu's policy of centralization of the state helped him to appoint people from outside tribal zones at provincial and local authority level which was not possible during the previous regime. This policy was accused of nepotism in nature and as leading to favoritism. Mobutu was also accused of silencing the representation of the people from grassroots level. Between 1970 and 1972, the law on customary leadership was once again changed. In terms of law 73/015 of 5 January 1973 collectivities lost their autonomy and became part of provincial administrations. This legislation did not have the desired effect as many chiefs were not enthusiastic about the reform.

locality in traditional Bavira land was to be transformed into a *groupement de Bijombo*,¹⁹⁸ the *mwami* of the Bavira refused to nominate a Banyamulenge as the local chief. He nominated, instead a Bavira (Gatimbirizo 1988:47-50), because by rehabilitating the traditional ownership of land amounted to recognizing them as Congolese (by then Zairean) citizens, which the local politicians did not want to see happen. Eventually, in September 1999, with the creation of new administrative entities in areas controlled by the RCD,¹⁹⁹ Minembwe was among the three new territories created by the department of local government²⁰⁰. Mr. Jondwe Ruhanduka became the Administrator of the territory in Minembwe, while for the first time a Banyamulenge woman, Commander Nyakayange Kega, became the deputy district commissioner²⁰¹ based in Bijombo in 2001.

On the other hand, the national identity and citizenship had become the most controversial issue in the DRC conflict. It is also the issue most exploited by both politicians and researchers alike. This results from four amendments to the clause of nationality in Congolese various constitutions, namely in 1904 to the Belgian colonizer' constitution;²⁰² in terms of law no 72-002 of 5 January 1972 to the constitution of 1972; amendment to the constitution of 1981 in terms of law no 81-002 of 2 June 1981 and amendment to the constitution of 29 April 1995. In terms of the amendment of 1972 Zairean nationality was given *en bloc* to all foreigners who were in the Congo at the time of independence on 30 June 1960, whereas the amendment of 1981 only gave Zairean nationality to those of whom at least one parent was in the Congo (Zaire) by 1885. The rest had to apply for it in their individual capacity.

¹⁹⁸ A local administrative entity that regroups a number of localities and sub-localities together. The decree from the Ministry of Local Government creating the *groupement de Bijombo* is no 0229 of 23rd of August 1979.

¹⁹⁹ *Rassemblement congolais pour la Démocratie* (Congolese Rally for Democracy).

²⁰⁰ These newly created administrative entities (Bunyakiri, Minembwe and Kasha in South Kivu Province), are still pending for their official recognition by the transitional government according to the Lusaka Accords signed in 1999.

²⁰¹ *Administrateur du Territoire Résident* from 2001 to 2002. Nyakayange later joined the Masunzu faction.

²⁰² «*Tout indigène congolais, tant qu'il réside sur le territoire de l'Etat, conserve sa nationalité congolaise, est soumis aux lois de l'Etat et reste traité comme sujet de l'Etat*». However, when the Congo Free State became a colony of Belgium, constitutionally, all Congolese (Lumumba 1962:78-81), including the Banyamulenge, lost their nationality and became stateless, because Congolese had no state of their own.

From a constitutional point of view, the Banyamulenge were not concerned by all these laws, since they, like any other Congolese tribe, are indigenous and their presence in what was to become the Congo can be traced back between the 16th and 19th centuries. The current transitional parliament has just adopted a new constitution, which makes provision for the inclusion of all people who were in the DRC at the time of its independence, namely on 30 June 1960. What is lacking though is the responsible government to give effect to it in a fair and just way. In addition, this constitution, as its predecessors, runs the risk of being violated, or of being amended depending to political interests of the powerful.

In response to the insecurity and the issue of nationality which a parliamentary commission on the identification of foreigners, led by Vangu, had to decide on, the Catholic Bishops of South and North Kivu Provinces published a pastoral letter addressed to Christians of Eastern Congo. In their message, the Bishops urged the government to solve the problem of Zairean nationality: “*C’est pourquoi, pour nous, archevêque et évêques, la nationalité zaïroise devrait être reconnu d’office aux Banyarwanda natifs du pays et à tous les immigrés rwandais et burundais qui se trouvaient déjà sur le territoire congolais avant le 30 juin 1960*” (Munzehirwa, Kataliko, Ngabu & Gapangwa 1995:2).²⁰³ It amounted to a violation of the constitution of the DRC by the executive, judicial and legislative powers, the very powers that are supposed to defend it. The issue has nothing to do with the Banyamulenge as a community among millions of other citizens, but is a failure of the leadership in administering justice to its citizens.

From a constitutional point of view, none of the above laws affect the citizenship of the Banyamulenge in the Congo, except for the ethnic hatred and tribalism and political exclusion that had replaced the law, as well as having replaced order and justice in the country. At the same time, the transplanted, the refugees, and the infiltrators as the Congolese politicians preferred to refer to them, they too, were supposed to have been protected by the law. Amending the constitution to favor or to exclude one group of people in one particular part of

²⁰³ That is why, for us, Archbishops and Bishops, the Zairean nationality would be recognized officially to Banyarwanda natives of this country and to all Rwandan and Burundi immigrants who were on Congolese territory before the 30 June 1960.

the country is irresponsible on the part of a proper and a postcolonial government, in particular. Surprisingly enough, these discriminative measures have only been applied to the people of the Eastern Congo whose origins are affiliated with Rwanda and Burundi, while the DRC shares her borders with nine other neighboring countries. Indeed, as far as the politicians are concerned, colonialism is to be blamed, but after forty-five years of independence, who do the Congolese blame for the failure of good governance in their country?

It is worthy noting that, during Mobutu's dictatorial regime since the 1980s, the Banyamulenge were excluded at all levels of the government. During the parliamentary elections of 1982, a Banyamulenge candidate, Joseph Mutambo, was disqualified from the elections (Mutambo 1997:93), as it was the case in 1987 when Musafiri Mushambaro and Dugu wa Mulenge were barred from running for parliamentary seats, on the ground of their "Nationalité douteuse"²⁰⁴ (Ruhimbika 2001:24; Pourtier 1996:15-38, Lemarchand 1997:173-193). However, the Banyamulenge people were eligible to vote for other candidates from other tribes. And Mutambo (1997:93) argues "A chaque approche des élections, le problème de nationalité était soulevé. Curieusement, tout en excluant les candidats Banyamulenge, les politiciens acceptaient et sollicitaient leur suffrage."²⁰⁵

In his report (E/CN/1996/66),²⁰⁶ Roberto Garreton, the UN Human Rights Commission Special Envoy for Zaire, stated with regard to the situation of human rights in Zaire: "During the Rwandan Tutsi refugee crises of 1959 and 1970, some political sectors began to identify the Banyamulenge as Rwandans ... They have suffered many injustices." The nationality law unjustly was not applied to them and they are now "identified only by the origin of their names and by their physical appearance. They are discriminated against at work, etc."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ dubious nationality.

²⁰⁵ With each approach of elections, the problem of nationality surfaced. Curiously the politicians, while excluding Banyamulenge candidates, accepted and solicited their votes.

²⁰⁶ The report was published on 29 January 1996.

²⁰⁷ This argument on identity reminds one of the arguments of Sartre and Fanon with regard to anti-Semitism and blackness respectively (Kruks 1996:122-133). Sartre argued that in an anti-Semitic world, a Jew is "over-determined" and he/she is never free not to be a Jew, the Other. For his part, Fanon experiences the

Policies of the one party system, the MPR in local administration affected the management of the church too (see Mudagiri, Rugabirwa & Mwangura 1980; Ruhimbika 2001:18). Dictatorship reigned everywhere. The Banyamulenge, regarded as foreigners in their own land, were frustrated. At one point in 1982, they set ballot boxes alight in response to not being allowed to vote, and as a result, the government had to cancel the elections in the whole province of South Kivu.²⁰⁸ Refusing them nationality and withdrawing it from the Banyamulenge community and other Congolese communities of Burundian and Rwandan origins were thus accentuated. The transitional Parliament's decision in April 1995 treated the Banyamulenge as mere immigrants and they had no right to Zairian (Congolese) nationality.²⁰⁹

Through all socio-political frustrations, the Banyamulenge youths and young political aspirants grew up like orphans with no one to depend on. But during the crises of the 1990s, they paved difficult and risky way into a historical political and armed opposition for their survival. In this regard, Weiss (2000:3) says that “faced with the danger of an ethnic cleansing campaign against them, the Banyamulenge undertook a preemptive strike against the National Zairian Army (AZN) soldiers.” Their means of survival became precarious and a prayer to gods of heavens might have secured a reason to hope for.

3.7.4 The coming of a new religion

3.7.4.1 The first missionaries

The Banyamulenge community today claims to be 99% Christians, and since the 1950s they belong to a number of church denominations. The church, however, had to embark on a

same over-determination of being a Negro. Whereas a Jew can still sometimes be anonymous, the Negro is betrayed by the color of his/her skin. In the anti-Tutsi world the Banyamulenge and the Tutsis in general, are over-determined by their appearance, name, and their culture, thus becoming the victim of something they never chose to be. In the film *Hotel Rwanda* which was screened in South African cinemas from July 2005, a humanitarian worker said that in her efforts to save Tutsi children, she had found a Tutsi girl carrying her sister at the Interahamwe roadblock in Kigali in April 1994. This girl was pleading with the killers to forgive them and that they would never be Tutsis again.

²⁰⁸ See, *Memorandum de Banyamulenge à la Conférence Nationale Souveraine – CNS* 1991).

²⁰⁹ See *Résolution sur la Nationalité*, 1995 (cf *Mémorandum de Banyamulenge* 1995; Ruhimbika 1995; Mutambo 1997:94-98).

difficult and long journey to achieve this remarkable cultural change. The Christian religion within the Banyamulenge community had been taken for granted, even by the Banyamulenge themselves, as if it is “their culture and tradition.” However, there is a history and a story to it, which people should know about: the clash of two religions in the community. It is a story of how the original community preserved its identity, while another new community was in the making. How did they perceive a new religion, as opposed to the religion of their culture? Were any benefits or losses involved in embracing the new religion? These are some of the critical questions that need to be answered in this section.

It is generally believed that Banyamulenge community was very resistant to Christianity, and there are some basic assumptions attached to this view : (i) Whites chased them from their pastures in order to establish their own ranches; (ii) Whites suppressed and cancelled all Banyamulenge local administrative leadership in favor of their neighboring communities; (iii) Whites were forcing Banyamulenge children to go to schools. For the Banyamulenge this meant that their children were going to be corrupted; (iv) Missionaries forced the Banyamulenge to eat “unclean” food (e.g. chicken, fish); (v) Missionaries had no respect for indigenous culture, tradition and religion.

Christianity came as a foreign religion of Whites associated with colonialism and Leopold II’s era of “free exploitation, forced labor, the whip and mutilation” (Arden 1968:26). Traditional God belonged to the culture and the culture belonged to the people. Thus, only those who belong to the same culture could share the same Traditional God. The more cultures, the more representatives of gods there were. In such a context the passage about the prophet Jonah (1:5) is well understood. The idea of an inter-cultural “shared god” was a totally new concept. To worship other gods amounted to blasphemy and a betrayal of their culture and religion, although, members of the Banyamulenge community respected other communities’ gods and ways of worship.

Missionaries who initially came to the Banyamulenge community were not Whites as such, but their disciples from the Bafuliro and Babembe communities. Among them were: Filipo Gahanga; Stefano Mujogo; Zakariya Dugari; Isake Sahiriza; Misabio; Yona Shinia. They

came from Lemera and Uvira from mission posts of the Swedish Pentecostal mission. They preached in Banyamulenge villages in Rugarama, Kito, Kishembwe, Kavugwa and Kalongi. Other missionaries were from a Norwegian Pentecostal mission post. They came from Kalambi, Mwenga territory and preached in the Itombwe and Tulambo localities. Others came from Baraka, in the Fizi territory, where the British Assemblies of God had a missionary post. They preached in Rutabura, commonly known as Bibogobogo, as well as in Ngandja, Kamombo and Minembwe locations. There were also Burundian missionaries such as Andrea Rurageze, Filipino Bwanike, Esau Kamondo who preached to the Banyamulenge community. They also came from the Swedish Pentecostal mission.

The first Swedish missionaries to the Bafuliru community arrived in Uvira and Lemera in 1922. In the 1950's some of these missionaries began to serve the Banyamulenge people. Amongst them were Gosta Palmetz, nicknamed Palmeshi; Thomas Wimberg, locally known as Fumberi and Lenea Aldolf known as Kanyabuyange. Banyamulenge Christians are in debt to those neighbors who made the sacrifice to come and preach to them. Nevertheless, all these missionaries (Africans and Whites) had different cultural backgrounds from that of Banyamulenge. In many cases, what looked taboo for Banyamulenge was normal for missionaries and vice versa. Thus the coming of the new religion carried along cultural conflicts.

3.7.4.2 Disturbance and confusion

Although many missionaries came to do work in the Banyamulenge community, it was difficult to convert the Banyamulenge to Christianity. It took more than twenty years since the establishment of Christian missions in the region to make a breakthrough. The first Banyamulenge to convert to Christianity was Mr. Samuel Ntakandi and this happened around 1930. He lived in Lemera near the Swedish mission base. He, however, had little contact with his own people, was despised and was not allowed to have a say in the community, for having broken ties with his religion. Instead, he turned to other communities and later became a missionary with the Swedish Pentecostal mission in Burundi where he remained until his death.

Following him, were three others who converted to Christianity in 1945, namely Messrs Andrea Kajabika and Matayo Mwangura and Mrs. Kibihira Bitwenge. They were baptized at the Swedish Pentecostal mission in Lemera. News that they had been baptized spread to the surrounding villages. This was considered as an act of blasphemy with regard to their traditional religion. They were isolated and were chased from the rest of the community. Madam Kibihira was chased away by her husband Mr. Petero Bitwenge and her family-in-law, having been accused of defilement and of breaking the covenant (the secret- *ibanga*) with her traditional religion; all her ornaments indicating her status as a wife were taken from her. Kibihira went to her own parents, but was also chased away there. Following two weeks of desperation, she decided to be with her only Lord, the one who cared for the homeless. She hanged herself in a small hut used as a chapel by the three converts.

Matayo Mwangura's wife divorced him. She could no longer live with a defiled man who had brought shame to the family and the community. Mwangura left for Cyangugu, Rwanda where he married a Rwandan Christian lady (they aren't alive any more but have left behind children and grand children). At the time of his conversion Andrea Kajabika was still single. All the girls in the community knew about his conversion which meant that he could not get a wife for himself in his own community. He found a Burundian Christian girl in Uvira who became his wife to this day. He retired as minister of the Assemblies of God in the Bijombo location and three of his sons and a son-in-law are pastors today.

Rasito Karikofi, in his early teens in 1952, followed the evangelist Kajabika and also became a Christian. When his parents heard about it, they wanted to kill him. His father armed with a machete went to confront him with the intention of finishing him up before returning to the village. He hurled the machete at Karikofi's face, cutting his cheek. Injured, the boy ran for his life. He was taken into the care of Kajabika in Rugarama village where he spent almost a year before he could be accepted back by his parents. He is still alive and serves the Free Methodist Church as a Pastor in Murambya Parish, Minembwe Territory. Fear and confusion reigned throughout the community. Exclusions and manhunts became the order of the day as the community feared that conversions would incite a curse from their

God and ancestors' spirits that are being defiled by the new religion. Cultural values were threatened and the community's future was in the balance.

Most of missionaries who came in Banyamulenge community possessed little knowledge in cross-cultural evangelism. Some of the White missionaries lacked African cultural sensitivity and they confused evangelization with 'westernization or modernization', which were not conducive to anthropological principles being applied, as Markowitz remarked (1973:15-16):

[T]he customs, mores, and institutions of the Africans were placed into two general categories: those which were 'bad' or harmful, and those which were 'good' or helpful. These designations provided no solid criteria by which to judge whether particular institutions, customs, or mores were either good or bad, or whether they were to be retained, transformed, or totally discarded. In the last analysis, the decision had to depend on the values, attitudes, prejudices, or whims of the missionaries involved.

Becoming a Christian was a radical and immediate change. As testimony to Christianity and in so doing, bearing shame for the sake of the gospel, a Banyamulenge Christian had to do many things not previously allowed. The following practices were imposed by missionaries:

- Diet and eating habits: As a Christian, it was compulsory eat chicken and fish. Furthermore, he/she had to associate with other tribes, sharing meals with them, eat with members of other tribes that the Banyamulenge regarded as inferior. One had to stop smoking and drinking local beer. The main difficulty in this regard was that drinking was a ceremonial act in communities. The traditional staple food of cooked blood (*ikiremve*) was also prohibited. The question was how and with what this cultural value should be replaced.

- Clothing: men and women had to remove all their ornaments from their necks, arms, legs and waist (in the case of the women). They also had to change the way their hair was cut;
- Traditional festivity: all traditional poetry, dances and instruments such as the *inanga* (harp), *umwirongi* (flute), were discouraged and abandoned. Instead, they adopted their Bafuliru neighbors' use of drums (*ingoma*). Later on, they began to use what could be termed as “typically White” instruments, such as guitars, keyboards and drums in church worship;
- Marriage: In the case of a man with more than one wife, he had to divorce (*gucagura*) himself from them and had to remain with only one, preferably the first wife. The issue that the missionaries did not deal with concerned the future of the other wives and their children.²¹⁰ To this day, the consequences of these broken marriages are still haunting many families.
- Worship: Tradition religion was wrong and bad and was to be abandoned. Yet the God of Christian religion was still identified as *Imana*, although the way of worship became a new venture.
- Health care: traditional medicines were discouraged as sin and people were encouraged to go to modern dispensaries and hospitals.

Christians were a minority group whose community and social security were in jeopardy. They came together as in unison to support one another and remained in constant prayer. Visits to church mission posts and local churches in urban areas were frequent for baptism, Holy Communion, spiritual nourishment, baptism and literacy classes. A journey took them up to three days on foot, depending on from where the journey was undertaken.

²¹⁰ This practice was enhanced by the doctrine of Mariam Kinyamarura see next section 3.8.

3.7.4.3 Conversion – a change of attitude in mass movement

Early in 1951, an evangelistic conference was organized by Pastor Stephano Mujogo of the Norwegian Pentecostal mission in Tulambo, Itombwe location. Evangelists Matayo Mwangura and Andrea Kajabika were also involved. By the end of the conference, many people had been baptized. Among them were Banyamulenge community members: Danyeri Mutumitsi with his two wives: Lea Ngorore and Sara Nabiduta (these two women were baptized six years after the death of Madam Kibihira).

By the end of 1951, the youth was gripped by a spirituality revival while looking after their livestock in their pastures and they started being converted to Christianity. Young people started traveling from one place to the other, looking for evangelists to pray for them. Those who were prayed for went back and prayed for others too. Within 5 years (1951-1956), 80% of the community had been converted to Christianity, some becoming Catholic, but the majority becoming Protestant.

In 1954 a second conference was held at Kabara location. This was the first conference that was attended by White missionaries in the Banyamulenge area. On 25 December 1955, a conference of shepherds was organized at Kungunda, Muryambya locality. This was a very special occasion. Among the organizers were Rasito Karikofi and Elisha Ndakangwa. Miracles happened: people were filled with the Holy Spirit; young men had dreams and prophesied. Others received gifts of discernment and they composed songs. Every hill, forest, river and cave around villages and pastures provided a place for them to pray.

A phenomenon of prophecies occurring in the form of “writings”, just like those that King Belshazzar received in Daniel 5 emerged. A person filled with the Spirit would produce some writings (*amandiko*), which no one would normally be able to read. Another person filled with the Spirit would take the writings and interpret them. Their interpretation made sense and revealed real prophecy. This phenomenon started around 1962 and today it still continues in churches in the Eastern Congo and in the Great Lakes Region. From the 1950s, prophecy occupied a central point in the Banyamulenge community. Every issue

that arose within the society, be it political or social, needed to be prayed for and “prophets” and church leaders were consulted about it.

The revival of the early 1970s brought about the phenomenon of “heavenly visitation”(amaono). Among the many interesting cases is the example of Mrs. Domitila Nyabibone who fell unconscious for four days at Kalonge in Minembwe in 1968. When she regained consciousness, she recounted many stories of heavenly places. Although Domitila did not go through formal education, she became a very prominent preacher. She has preached in many cities of Africa and beyond. She is currently based in Canada. Mrs. Mariamu Kinyamarura is another example²¹¹. She created a big “spiritual” centre in Kabela, Baraka, where people from different villages, cities and even from neighboring countries would come to consult her. She died in Rwanda during the Banyamulenge deportation by the Mobutu government in 1996 after having been severely beaten (see Ruhimbika 2001:48).

People learned to read and write without going to formal school. Each village built a small church. Kirundi Bibles and songbooks were used at first and later Swahili and Kinyarwanda books were used in church services and literacy classes. Consciously or unconsciously, being a Christian had become a new way of life - a new culture.

3.7.4.4 Testing times

A massive backslide took place from 1956 to 1957, the cause of which is unknown. It can, however, be assumed that some people became Christian just because others (their peers or groups) had gone that way. The other reason could have been a lack of discipleship. For instance, in Rurambo locality most churches in the villages were empty, a mere two years after their construction. Two women, Nyazuba and Nyabeza, however, kept their Christian faith in their village.

During this time the Catholic Church grew. Many of those who found it difficult to comply with Protestant conditions turned to Catholicism – the moderate church which allowed its

²¹¹ Allegations around her ministry are that she did not eat nor drink and lied on her bed for more than 30 years. She was usually fed by angels. These allegations had raised many anthropological, social and theological debates which need to be further investigated.

members to keep tobacco pipes; and did not place severe restrictions on the consumption of local beer. During this time a dance, taken over from the Bafuliro, known as the *imbarato* and the *cihariza* and the main song, the *ntamakemwa* composed by Nyamudida and Sebikamiro was popular and often sung during festivities. One of the songs in the *ntamakemwa*, the evangelist Andrea Kajabika, who was trying to admonish and edify believers, was mocked:

Wazanywe ni iki Anderea?

Naje kureba abananiwe, nabo nasanze, barirekeye.

Yemwe bakobga bakund'iy'isi, iraha yo mw'ijuru izabonande?

Reka mbagire abazoyibona.

*Ni babazungu babongereza.*²¹²

Or

Ninde wakuvuze Semuhoza?

Sinje wakuvuze

Ni Wokovu yaje ivug' amakuru,

*Yaje mwi Jipi ya Bwana Riga*²¹³.

What is clear is that the first song gives expression to skepticism towards “Christianization” in terms of which missionaries emphasized a new meaning of heaven which, however, was neither contextualized, nor convincing. In other words, there wasn't a proper Christian foundational teaching. In the second song, the composer is mocking Zakariya Semuhoza²¹⁴ who resisted colonial decision that prevented Banyamulenge

²¹² Andrea what brought you here?

I came to visit the backsliders. But even those that I found have given up.

You ladies, who lust for things of this world;

Who will inherit the joy of heaven?

I tell you, it is those British [missionaries].

²¹³ Who betrayed you Semuhoza?

But it is not I who accused you.

You were betrayed by a Christian songbook

Which was found in the Jeep of Mr. Riga (Rugan).

²¹⁴ Semuhoza like many other Banyamulenge, resisted against the Belgian farmer's decision that prevented them to pasture their cattle in Minembwe. But defiantly, during the day and night, they grazed in hiding. Semuhoza,

livestock to pasture in Minembwe and was betrayed by his Christian songbook found in his pocket during his arrest. What newly converted Christians had initially been taught in many cases pertained to prescriptions and restrictions associated with the eating of chicken and fish, the consumption of local beer (*inzoga*) or smoking of pipes. These Christians needed more instruction than that, which underlines the importance of education in a process involving conversion not necessarily a cultural change. What really lacked from the start was a constructive theology that would make a transitional step from Banyamulenge traditions to Jesus' teaching. Hence, compatibility of these traditions would have made a real contribution to the community.

3.7.5 Education

3.7.5.1 Formal education

The coming of Christianity brought about spiritual and social change. The church provided “the inspirational and moral basis for social and political change” (Markowitz 1973:145). People's mentality were changed and with it their social life too. Christianity taught them new ways of life. Children went to school and hygiene formed part of their social education. Through church activities health centers, dispensaries and schools were introduced and built in villages.

In 1957, a Swedish missionary by the name of Gosta Palmertz (Palmeshi) visited Bijombo and accredited a privately initiated primary school up to standard three. This school was the initiative of Danyeri Mutumitsi. The school fell under the supervision of Kasenga primary school in Uvira. In August 1999 at a bricklaying occasion for a new girls' school in Bijombo, built by Groupe Milima,²¹⁵ Mutumitsi recalled their prayers in the same area in 1957. Among their prayer requests at that time were: church and local administrative entity, schools, dispensaries and roads in their area.

then took his cows in the Belgian concession and in the process, he was caught by Mr. Riga, and in his pocket was found a Christian songbook known in Swahili “*nyimbo za wokovu*”.

²¹⁵ Groupe Milima is a local non-governmental organization that works in Uvira and Bijombo areas. It also intervenes in various domains among them, education. The name Groupe Milima means a group of mountains.

In 1961-1962, Bijombo locality got a full primary school with 6 classes. Among the first pupils of this primary school is Dr Runyambo Nyabuhanga²¹⁶. Pastor Amos Kavuye (from the Bafuliru tribe) from Uvira was appointed as headmaster, while Elia Gaturuturu became the deputy headmaster, the first Banyamulenge to hold the highest post in public administration. Elia Gaturuturu and Lazaro Bigeyo had just completed their high school certificates in 1961, followed by Labani Muringa in 1963 and Frederick Muhoza Gisaro in 1964. They also became the community's first university graduates, Gisaro graduating in 1969 and Muringa in 1971. The first secondary school with 3 classes was opened at Kabara locality in the mid 1970s with a Swedish missionary headmaster, Mr. Roland. While a full secondary school in Bijombo was accredited in 1981.

The Catholic Church had a strong influence on the social development of the community. The first Banyamulenge theologian Fr. Jerome Gapangwa obtained a doctorate degree in 1984 and was the Bishop of the Catholic Church in Uvira Diocese from 1985 to 2002. Many of the Catholic Church members converted to Pentecostalism, particularly during the mid 1970s. The Catholic Church accredited three secondary schools in Minembwe, Kagogo and Bibangwa locations.

By the end of the 1980s, Protestant churches had run more than 10 secondary schools and more than 20 primary schools in Minembwe territory. From the mid 1970s the Banyamulenge youths were eager to pursue formal education both at secondary and tertiary levels. By the end of the 80's thousands of these young Banyamulenge became graduates from secondary schools and from national universities, particularly Lubumbashi and Kisangani universities. Although young people were given freedom to study, girls were mainly limited to primary and secondary levels, because they would be married at an early age.

This state of affairs is gradually changing and parents are now willingly offering equal educational opportunities to boys and girls. From the end of the 90's a substantial number

²¹⁶ He became the first Banyamulenge medical doctor in early 1980s. He served for many years in Swedish Pentecostal church hospital in Lemera and at Kiliba hospital. From 1999 he became the head of Provincial Medical Sector in South Kivu.

of university graduates were embarking on post-graduate studies. Nyakayange Kega became the first Banyamulenge woman to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1986 while Olivia Nabintu became the first Banyamulenge woman to earn a Masters degree in International Law. Although the Banyamulenge youth started their school careers fairly late, their performance was outstanding. They became very competitive and adapted themselves wherever they went, despite the enormous socio-political challenges they had to face.

3.7.5.2 Theological training

In 1967, two Banyamulenge students enrolled for Bible training in Lemera: Noa Mudagiri and Daudi Ntagora. Early in the 1970's others followed: Daudi Munyangurube, Daudi Mutanga, Samweli Buruma, Samweli Semutobo, Elia Byondo, Simoni Sebitereko, Elia Makono, Mrs. Sofia Narukundo, Inoki Karojo, among others. Early in 1980, young people started going to Bible colleges and theological seminaries and universities. Among the first ones were: Mayshara Rurenza from the Assemblies of God, Rukema Rushengererwa from the Free Methodists, Bachoba Biguge from the Swedish Pentecostal church and Mudakikwa Ndagano of the Assemblies of God. By the year 2000, several hundred Banyamulenge people had undergone Bible and theological training. The church became a well-established institution, which provided basic services to the community.

In September 1997, Eben-Ezer Ministry International (EMI) organized a conference on peace, reconciliation and thanksgiving, immediately after the war of the AFDL against the Mobutu regime. Unfortunately, there was a plane crash killing all passengers on board. A plane carrying delegates crashed and twenty-two people lost their lives among them pastors, friends from Israel, Rwanda and Burundi. They gave their lives as sacrifice for the sake of the gospel and reconciliation. About 32 000 people attended the conference making it the biggest gathering in the history of the church in the Minembwe territory (Rukundwa 1997).

3.7.6 Church leadership

From 1950 to 1974 the Banyamulenge did not have their own church leadership. They depended on mission posts in Uvira, Lemera, Baraka and Itombwe. Some of the first Banyamulenge local church leaders (who served either as elders or as evangelists) were: In Bijombo location: Andrea Kajabika, Matayo Mwangura, Petero Nzamu, Samuel Bugwejera, Ibrahimu Sebukubo, Ibrahimu Shakagabo. In Itombwe location: Daudi Mutanga; Simoni Muganwa. In Minembwe and Kamombo locations were: Elia Byondo, Daudi Makombe, Samuel Semutobo and Yunusi Rupembge. In 1974 Pastor Evariste Bujanja from CADEZA²¹⁷ was designated as the first Banyamulenge to oversee a local church administration with a stamp (seal) of the church in Rutigita, Minembwe.

In 1978, CEPAC²¹⁸ also delegated church administration of autonomous missions (parishes)²¹⁹ to Bijombo Parish, led by Rev. Noa Mudagiri Tabazi as the overseer and Pastor Simoni Sebitereko as the first secretary of the Parish. He supervised more than fifteen local churches. Other designated autonomous missions in the same year were Minembwe mission, led by Rev. Daudi Makombe; Kabara mission led by Rev. Samusoni Rwizihirwa and Bijojo mission led by Rev. Rugabirwa Budegembe.

In 1979 the CMLC²²⁰ administration chose Pastor Bitebetebe Rusingizwa as the first Superintendent to oversee the Methodist parishes of Bwala and Minembwe. While in 1986 Pastor Rukema Rushengererwa was elevated to head the development department at national level in the church. Within CELPA²²¹ Pastor Sila Mulondanyi was chosen to oversee Minembwe parish at Ilundu in 1978. Church leaders, alongside local chiefs, became consultative figures, and became part of the decision making processes affecting various community matters. The experience of the church in Indian cultures is very similar

²¹⁷ *Communauté des Assemblées de Dieu à l'Est du Zaïre* (Assemblies of God Church in Eastern Congo).

²¹⁸ *Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique* (Pentecostal church in Africa).

²¹⁹ In Swedish Pentecostal church terminology, “mission” meant “parish”.

²²⁰ *Communauté Méthodiste Libre au Congo* (Free Methodist Church in Congo).

²²¹ *Communauté des Eglises Libre de Pentecôte en Afrique* (Free Pentecostal Church in Africa).

to that of the Banyamulenge community. Sahay (1986:293-294) explains the church's leadership role in India as follows:

A catechist [pastor] is essentially a religious head of the Christian village and has to see if religious obligations of the Christian villagers are being fulfilled in a satisfactory manner. Besides, he has also to guide the social norms set by Christianity. He is expected to be informed about all the village affairs, whether social or religious. His presence is essential in every village council meeting and his words carry a significant weight in making any decision.

In 1982 Pastor Elia Bugunzu became the Provincial Representative of CADC²²² and South and North Kivu provinces fell under his supervision. In 1985 Mgr Jerome Gapangwa became the first Bishop of the Catholic Church in the Uvira Diocese. In 1995, Pastor Ruben Ruganza elected as the General Secretary of the CELPA in the DRC, the office that he holds till now. In August 2003, pastor Isaac Bujambi, was elected as the General Secretary of the Free Methodist church in the DRC. Over the years a number of pastors and evangelists became missionaries throughout the country and beyond. Among them pastors Sefaniya Rumenera, Simon Gahungu and Victor Mikebanyi can be singled out among the longest serving missionaries. Pastor Rumenera started his mission work with CELPA in early 1970s among the Bashi community in South Kivu. In 1990, he was moved to Kinshasa until his death in 1997. Pastor Gahungu started his missionary work in 1980 in Maniema, Kinshasa and later on started to work with Somali communities in Kenya. He is currently working with pastors Victor Mikebanyi also a Banyamulenge in Somaliland with Norwegian Pentecostal church.

²²² Communautés des Assemblées de Dieu du Congo (“Assemblies of God Church in Congo”).

In 1986 the first local NGO was introduced to the community. This NGO was affiliated to CADC and was originally known as PAHU.²²³ It later changed its name to Groupe Milima. Over the past 15 years, it has focused its work on the communities living in the mountains of Minembwe with its focus being primarily on agriculture, livestock and primary education for girls. In 1995 and 1997 two other NGOs were established to promote development and peace building in the area, namely UGEAFI²²⁴ and Eben-Ezer Ministry (EMI). A couple of others followed later, including women's associations.

3.8 The community at a crossroad

3.8.1 Church schism

3.8.1.1 *Communauté des Assemblées Dieu en Afrique (CADAF)*

Initially known as Pentecostal Missionary Union (PMU) was formed by British missionaries. Around 1920 two missionaries from the British UPMGBI,²²⁵ G. Richard and W. Keller came to Fizi in the Eastern Congo via Tanzania and were based at Baraka under the Belgium administrative post. The Catholics had a mission post in Fizi territory long before the arrival of the British missionaries. But, this post had been abandoned due to disease long before the arrival of the British missionaries (Musabga 1996:15). The first recipient community was Babembe. None of the local people had a formal education. But missionaries recruited some of the local people to work in their missions as houseboys and watchmen, who eventually became their first converts.

According to Rukema (1985:11), *“les missionnaires...recrutèrent des maçons, des ouvriers et des employés des maisons, ceux-ci furent les premiers collaborateurs...Ils furent mieux considérés et utiles dans l'œuvre d'interprétation et d'évangélisation parmi les leurs.”*²²⁶

²²³ *Projet Agro-pastoral des Hauts-Plateaux d'Uvira* (Agro-pastoral Projet of the Higher Plateaus of Uvira).

²²⁴ *Union des Groupes d'Education et d'Animation de Fizi-Itombwe* (Union of Education and Action Groups of Fizi-Itombwe).

²²⁵ Union Pentecostal Missions of Great Britain and Ireland. Today, it is known as *Communauté des Assemblées Dieu en Afrique* (CADAF – Assemblies of God Church in Africa).

²²⁶ Missionaries ... recruited bricklayers, labourers and domestic workers, who became their first collaborators ... They were considered useful as interpreters and for evangelism of their own people.

Most of them later on became local missionaries and were sent to evangelize local communities, including the Banyamulenge between 1945 and 1955. Among their first Banyamulenge converts were Filipo Ntamunozza, Petero Segapara, Yohana Rukangira, Petero Nyawikariza, Yosefu Ndasonza, Zakaria Semagagara at villages of Bibogobogo and Kabugu in Fizi territory.

However, a sharp division developed between White missionaries and local Babembe pastors due to a misunderstanding over evangelism strategies (Rukema 1985:24-27). Eventually, it affected the Banyamulenge local churches. The following causes of the rift are listed:

- Church leadership became a problem. Missionaries wanted to relinquish the management of their mission post to another white mission post which acted in an overseeing. Local pastors wanted to manage its full administration;
- Lucrative and development ambitions: missionaries were concerned with “spiritual nourishment” more so than with physical development;
- Poor strategies in mission expansion were another cause. Missions could not expand to other territories as the north of the Fizi territory was occupied by Swedish missionaries; the west by Norwegians and Lake Tanganyika is to the south-east of the territory.

Local Babembe pastors approached the UPMGB with many requirements, while the White missionaries were not flexible to accept any local demands. In view of the fact that the Methodist church was already established in neighboring Burundi. Congolese (local) pastors in Fizi decided to sever its ties with the UPMGB and to seek affiliation with the Methodist church in Burundi.

3.8.1.2 *Communauté Méthodiste Libre au Congo (CMLC)*

Early in 1962, the UPMGBI dissidents went to Burundi and affiliated to the MLM²²⁷ and brought it in their community. The next year, a complete separation of the two opposing groups in the UPMGB took place. Officially, missionaries Philip Klines and Russell

²²⁷ *Mission Libre Méthodiste* (Free Methodist Mission).

Peterson established the Methodist church in Fizi in 1963 (Musabga 1996:19). Pastor Byaene Akulu (from the Babembe tribe) became the Bishop the church since 1963 to 2003.

The coming of the MLM to the area resulted in more confusion with regard to doctrinal issues among the region's established churches, namely the Norwegian and Swedish Pentecostal churches. The Norwegian and Swedish churches were conservative in their approach and adhered to their church liturgy and discipline, while the Methodist church emphasized a 'spirit-led' approach. They believed that only the Spirit of God can give direction and create order in the church and that there was no need for biblical and theological training (Buhungu 1992:16). Many problems arose as a result but two were generalized in many Methodist churches:

- Prophecy and revivals. Due to lack of proper teaching and strong leadership in the church, prophecy became the source of indiscipline in many churches. Church members consulted prophets more than they did with the Bible and their church leadership. In this regard the example of prophetess Mariam Kinyamarura, who became so famous that she became a consultant for churches, can be quoted. Lack of proper strong church leadership led to heresies in many churches.
- Many revival groups such as *Maruba* emerged in the early 1960s. The name *Maluba* comes from a Kibembe song that goes as follows: *Mti wa uma wamena maluba* (a dry stick has flourished). Another group called itself *Abayumbe* (meaning messengers taken from Swahili word *ujumbe* - message). This group of people claimed to have received a message from God which they had to take either to a particular people or to villages and churches between 1969 and 1975. They would go to a particular community or village as a team and their mission there would last for as long as it took for their message to be delivered. Another group that was established late in 1980 was called *Busoka*, the name also derived from a Kibembe song "*Ah busoka manga wani mtima uwanja Abecha!*" (Oh what happiness in my spirit praising the Lord!). Most of the time, church leadership experienced difficulties to maintain order and discipline in these groups.

- Breaking up of marriages (*indowa*): Through the prophetess Mariam's doctrine, sexual intercourse meant consummation of marriage. This doctrine brought confusion and led to the breaking up of many families especially within the Banyamulenge community, and affected all different churches in the area. The following example is quoted: A young man had intercourse with a widow. The young man and the widow converted to Christianity and the young man got married in church to another woman. After twenty years of marriage, he was told to leave his wife and his children to go back to the widow who was in her 60s. He divorced his lawful wife and joined the widow. Family life was severely disrupted with children losing the warmth and security only parents can offer and looked on while their mothers quietly left them, not knowing why such a thing was happening to them; they were raised like orphans while their mothers were still alive.

3.8.1.3 Mission Libre Norvégienne (MLN)

Currently known as CELPA²²⁸ this mission was established among the Bashi community in Kaziba, South Kivu Province in 1921 by missionaries Rev. Gunerrius Tollefsen and his wife Oddbjorg and Ms Hanna Veum from Norway (Buhungu 1992:9). They experienced problems to settle in the area due to "*problème géographique, mépris, menaces de catholiques romaines et la population qui les considérait comme des colonisateurs à cause de la même peau blanche*"²²⁹ (Makelele 1991:12). This mission later expanded to Kalambi, Mwenga territory among the Barega community, Itombwe among the Babembe and Banyamulenge communities.

Although Norwegian missionaries came to the area along with their Swedish counterparts, they did not work together. They rather decided to divide their mission areas, although they kept close links. They made a remarkable social contribution by building schools, health centres and hospitals. The primary school of Malanda is among the first schools where Banyamulenge children in 1957 became educated in Itombwe location.

²²⁸ *Communauté des Eglises Libres de Pentecôte en Afrique* (Free Pentecostal Church in Africa).

²²⁹ [T]he geographical problem, threats from Roman Catholics and from the population who regarded them as colonizers because of their white skins.

3.8.1.4 *Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôtes en Afrique (CEPAC)*

The first group of Swedish missionaries of CEM²³⁰ arrived in Uvira in 1922. Among the pioneers were Lemeul Karisson, David and Svea Flood, Julius and Ruth Aspenlind and they settled among the Bafuliru community. Settling was not easy for a number of reasons, inter alia the many colonial administrative rules that applied to missionaries and tropical diseases. By the end of 1924 the Aspenlinds settled in Lemera, which became the centre of the Swedish Pentecostal Mission and still is today (Buhugu 1992:13).

CEPAC worked tirelessly to expand its efforts and to bring the gospel to the Banyamulenge community. The first Banyamulenge converts were baptized in this church. In certain places it provided elementary education and most of the community's first educated people came from the Swedish mission schools in Lemera, Kasenga and Kiliba. Under the leadership of pastor Jean Ruhigita as the Legal Representative (Bishop) of the church at national level, the church began to have problems with its own member parishes since early 1970s (Bacoba 2001:3). Three main groups from within the Banyamulenge community severed ties with CEPAC and joined other denominations.

- In 1962, a group of local churches joined a revival movement known as *Maruba* established by the Free Methodist church. CEPAC leadership was skeptical about this movement and warned its members not to join the group. But churches led by Evangelist Yohana Nyabuhuga ignored these orders and were excommunicated whereupon they joined the Free Methodist church.
- In 1978, during the nominations of parish administrative leadership of CEPAC in the Banyamulenge community, the position for the Kabara parish was contested between two candidates, Pastor Elia Byondo and Pastor Rwizihirwa. Pastor Elia Byondo won, but pastor Ruhigita, the Legal Representative, favored Pastor Rwizigura and appointed him to oversee the mission/parish. Pastor Byondo regarded this as favoritism and found it an unacceptable practice. He immediately left CEPAC and joined the CMLC.

²³⁰ Congo Evangelical Mission.

- In 1980 many other churches left CEPAC and joined the Assemblies of God (CADC). According to the letter written by Mudagiri, Rugabirwa and Mwangura (1980) on behalf of the departing churches. Main accusations against CEPAC leadership would be related to corruption, injustice, dictatorship, nepotism and tribalism.

Frustrations that Banyamulenge pastors experienced were shared with many pastors from other communities too. However, the Banyamulenge became vocal because their socio-political survival depended on church leadership, especially after the death of their Member of Parliament, Honorable Gisaro, in 1980. This struggle coincided with conflict within the *Groupement de Bijombo* (Mutambo 1997:86-93), which was a local politico-administrative entity of the Banyamulenge, but contested by local politicians from neighboring communities.

The *Groupement* was contested for many years by local authorities and the debate again had surfaced. The Church at provincial and at national levels never concerned itself with this community's struggles for justice. This is also true of the war of 1996 when people (church members) were being arrested, harassed, deported and killed. The Protestant church in general remained passive, while their brothers from the Catholic Church made their position on social political and economic crises in the country clear.

3.8.1.5 *Communauté de l'Assemblée de Dieu du Congo (CADC)*

All Banyamulenge pastors serving CEPAC had several meetings between 1979 and 1980 concerning their future due to injustice committed by church leadership. Finally they took decision to leave CEPAC and to form their own ministry. Initially they all agreed to leaving, but at the last minute, some decided to remain with CEPAC. Pastors Mudagiri Tabazi, Rugabirwa Budegembe and Mwangura Ndinzimana led those who resigned from CEPAC and accepted risks of excommunication.

Pastor Ruhigita informed and warned the Provincial Synod of Protestant churches known as *Eglise du Christ au Zaire/Congo* (ECZ/ECC)²³¹ not to receive any of the excommunicated pastors. They went to Kinshasa and joined the Assemblies of God (CADC), established in 1964 (Buhungu 1992:20-21). The CADC accepted the “dissident group” on the grounds that they were unfairly treated and unjustly excommunicated.

For the past twenty years (1980-2000), the church was immersed in confusion, division and uncertainty. Bacoba lists three main causes for this state of affairs as being social, political and doctrinal (Bacoba 2001:5). Tribalism had penetrated to the core of all communities and the church was not spared. The Catholic Bishop of the diocese of Uvira, Mgr. Gapangwa had been the target of socio-political incitement, criticism and tribalism, through the entire period that he had been the head of the diocese in Uvira (cf Ruhimbika 2001:18-20) until the Vatican in 2002 had no choice but to replace him.

For their part, churches in the Banyamulenge community were deeply divided by Mariam’s prophecies that the CADC was not of God and whoever associated with it, was committing a sin. Sharp divisions of whether to accept CADC or to excommunicate it, arose among other denominations. An agreement could not be reached and as a result some of the churches supported the CADC, while others distanced themselves from it completely. CEPAC and those churches that subscribed to the prophecies of Mariam, prohibited all contact and even marriage with CADC members (Buhungu 1992:50). In 1997 the CEPAC national leadership officially announced forgiveness of CADC (Mehne & Kuye, 1997). Some church members from CEPAC and CMLC in Minembwe territory however, rejected this decision, especially the followers of the Mariam doctrine.

3.8.2 Concept of *abacu* as social system

In the Banyamulenge community, the term *abacu* (companions) can also mean brotherhood. The word comes from *iwacu* (our home, where we inhabit or where we belong). Unlike the English term “brotherhood”, the *abacu* is genderless and includes all

²³¹ Church of Christ in Zaire/Congo.

members of the community regardless of their sex, age and status. Ancestors are also part of this structure.²³² The term means to belong together – those who are ours. Since colonial time, Banyamulenge lost their hierarchical structured system within their society due to colonial suppression of their traditional chieftaincy.

Gradually and unconsciously, they developed another structure of survival from the concept of *abacu*. Since they were subjects of other tribes' chieftaincies, elders of the community would meet from time to time to discuss matters arising and find a collegial solution. This was because, the community had only remained with leaders known as *gapita* or *kirongozi* (local chief) who, in their capacities, no longer had powers to make any big decision of their own. The leadership role became functional whereby; delegates to these functions were to liaise the community with the rest of political and administrative structures. Big decision remained a prerogative of the council of elders, where all members were treated on equal basis.

In 1980s and especially in early 1990s the term was politically employed by the community amid political tension, harassment and exclusion from the Zairian government, which the community had to endure. Thus *abucu* versus outsiders, informed members of the community that “we belong” together for better or for worse. The term becomes inclusive regardless of social strata. Although the term is also used by Burundians and Rwandans, the Banyamulenge connotation is unique. The *abacu* goes beyond social realm to include political and religious realities that exclusively affect one group of people. In other words, it contains a sense of marginality. Within the concept of *abacu*, fulfillment of functions rather than positions is what matters. Elders and leaders appointed to serve in

²³² In 1982, our family had moved from Bijombo to Itombwe since my father was to work with Norwegian church in Itombwe. Due to tribal conflict between Banyamulenge and Babembe communities, the Babembe local chief for the location accused Banyamulenge of instigating violence in the area. A company of soldiers from Fizi arrived to arrest Banyamulenge local leaders. Soldiers surrounded our village Kuwimbogo. Men, women and children were all rounded up as soldiers made search of all houses. My father told people to pray. As people started praying. One old mother, Monika Nyangondo, started to invoke the name of her late husband and said: “*Nyarushumba we, ngwino utabare abana bawe*,” (Nyarushumba come and save your children). My father rebuked her and said: “*Reka guhamagara abapfuye, hamagara Imana*” (do not call the dead [ancestors], call up on God). The grand mother said, “*oyaye we, reka tumuhamagere n’uwacu kandi ni mwiza*” (no, he is part of us and he is also good). This gives a deep meaning of the concept of *abacu* (see also chapter one above section 1.1 note 8).

various capacities such as a *gapita* (local chef), clergy or even chairmanship of mutuality in Diaspora, could only do it as a function. In this case a collegial decision is important for the rest of the community.

3.8.3 Political leadership and its challenges from 1996 to 2005

If there is one thing that could never be justified and about which consensus would never be reached among the Banyamulenge community, it is the rebellion that broke out on 2 August 1998. Unlike previous rebellions, the RCD's war against Kabila might have had its political and military reasons, but it created divisions within the community that have never before been experienced. Two streams of political position gradually emerged during the war of 1996, which created a dilemma for the young and inexperienced, but very enthusiastic politicians. The Banyamulenge had to enter into a political partnership with Kabila, who in the 1960s led a rebellion in which many of the Banyamulenge people were killed and their cattle raided.²³³ The challenge was to now turn a former "enemy" into an ally.

This also applied to Kabila as well as to other tribes.²³⁴ They were compatriots, whether or not they liked it and they had to find a way of solving their differences and of forging an interim common front to "liberate" the country from dictatorial and collapsed regime of Mobutu. How would this partnership work in a highly tribalized environment, remained unsolved issue? Neither Kabila nor the Banyamulenge young politicians had time to critically assess the future of their political alliance. Had this been done, it could have helped prevent the worst from happening. It is believed that this hasty alliance was forged

²³³ In October 1996, an old mother Kesiya Namusarange, looked at the youths ready to join the AFDL in Bukavu, and she asked them with some irony where they were going. They enthusiastically answered her that they were going to join the "liberation movement." "That of Kabila?" She laughed and in a soft voice said, "*ni mugende muracar'abana! Kabila waziciy'amaberi niwe uzabakamira?*" What she said was "Go, you are still young! Kabila, he who killed milking cows, will he be able to provide milk for you?" She used sensitive language but actually referred to the survival of the community. The meaning of her statement was: could he, the one who turned children into orphans in the first place, ever be trusted to care for them? This refers to the rebellion of 1960s. The young people replied that that belonged to the past and that they were prepared to reconcile. She was, however, sceptical and her prediction proved to be right within months.

²³⁴ The Banyamulenge made a significant contribution in defeating the 1964 rebellion in Uvira and Fizi. However, the role they played in saving the country led to animosity between them and their immediate neighbours in these areas. This is a real paradox.

under regional and international influence and not much time had gone into the preparation of the alliance.

Many of the Banyamulenge elders believed that this alliance could only lead to disaster. They did not expect the Kabila of the 1990s to be any better than the Kabila of the 1960s, whom they described as *uwaciye inka amaberi*.²³⁵ On the other hand, the Banyamulenge community needed support from whoever would save them from the Zairean government oppression. Regional governments,²³⁶ particularly the Rwandan government appeared to understand dangers of exclusion and extermination based on ethnicity among other reasons and it was quick to offer its assistance.

Earlier, in 1994, Rwanda was a safe haven for the Banyamulenge and other Tutsis from the Eastern Congo fleeing from the Zairean local authorities' harassment and killings. Secondly, the RPA²³⁷ was particularly concerned about Rwandan security around its borders with the DRC where Interahamwe and former FAR²³⁸ were engaged in military activities. These activities provided enough evidence of persisting insecurity for Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region. However, for the Banyamulenge and other Congolese in political alliance - AFDL, questions pertaining to how long they would enjoy RPA protection and support and what form such alliance would take, became immediate concerns.

From December 1996, events started moving first and the relationship between the Banyamulenge and their allies overtaken by both political and economic ambitions. In a meeting organized in Butare, between Banyamulenge politicians and intellectuals and their Rwandan ally, certain security concerns in Congo were mentioned. Consensus could however, not be reached with regard to these concerns. They gradually became a point of

²³⁵ The literal meaning is "the one who cuts the cow's teats." This expression is used to refer to an enemy, the one who kills. An enemy, who kills the cow that provides milk for the family, might as well also physically kill the family. Again, the absence of the cow and milk in the family signify starvation, malnutrition, poverty and death.

²³⁶ Diverse interests of individual governments that were involved played a role.

²³⁷ The Rwandan Patriotic Army.

²³⁸ *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (Rwandan Armed Forces).

discord between Banyamulenge politicians and their Rwandan ally. At the same time, early in 1997, Kabila gradually began to exclude many of the Banyamulenge who gathered around him, both from the army and in politics. By the time he formed his government in Kinshasa in June 1997, very few members of Banyamulenge community remained in his entourage.

In February 1998, soldiers from the Banyamulenge community led a mutiny in Lemera, Uvira territory. They were protesting against injustice practiced in the army which was affecting them directly. However, this act was interpreted differently by Kabila and James Kabarebe (from Rwanda) who, at the time, was serving as the Chief of Staff for the Congolese National Army. They saw the mutiny as an act of indiscipline. Not being able to have confidence and trust in their compatriot ally (Kabila), nor having fully shared interests with their Rwandan ally, Banyamulenge politicians and soldiers eventually, found themselves at a crossroad.

August 1998 became a decisive moment for politicians – members of Banyamulenge community. A coalition of dissident Congolese politicians and soldiers, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, started another rebellion against Kabila. Reasons for this rebellion were controversial and some Banyamulenge politicians felt that the community was being taxed to justify a rebellion that they did not know. Later on, Rwanda and Uganda would disagree on visions and principles with regard to rebellion, economic and political interests in the DRC. Eventually, they parted, each supporting a Congolese rebel movement of its choice. In 1999, these two sister countries (Rwanda and Uganda) ended up fighting each other in Kisangani over political and economic interests, resulting in heavy casualties among their soldiers and Congolese civilian population. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola joined the war on the side of Kabila.

The Banyamulenge politicians and soldiers were divided on the issue of whom to side with. One group, led by Bizima Karaha, Moïse Nyarugabo, the current Vice-President Azarias Ruberwa, Benjamin Serukiza, among others, was of the opinion that after severing ties with Kabila, there was no other alternative, but to join the new rebel movement (the

RCD) supported by Rwanda. They, in fact, became the last group to join other rebel members who were forming the RCD. Unfortunately, members of Banyamulenge stood out, not necessarily because of their ideas but because of their ethnic belonging.

Another group, led by Joseph Mutambo,²³⁹ Muller Ruhimbika²⁴⁰ and others, was not in favor of Banyamulenge support for the RCD option and formed their own political party, the FRF.²⁴¹ This party opposed the second war and criticized the influence and role of Rwanda in this war. Many Congolese, unfortunately, did not recognize these internal differences among the Banyamulenge, but preferred to treat them all as a common enemy. For Kabila and his government, the enemy was not a rebel in the RCD or in other rebel movements, but a Tutsi regardless of his/her gender, age and affiliation. It is for this reason that Yerodia Ndombasi had no hesitation to refer to the Banyamulenge people as “vermin” in August 1998 followed by their massacre.

Struggles between the two groups (RCD and FRF) for control of the community began to develop and as the years went by, it got worse. Economic and political interests, not very prominent and pronounced within the value system of the local and traditional Banyamulenge community, began to emerge. The sense and values of the old way of life of commonality in the system of *abacu*, began to wane. The community was undergoing social and political mutation, at times without being noticed. It must be noted that during the rebellion and the difficult times from the early 1960s through to the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, the community was constantly on the defense, having to fight for the survival of families and their properties.

Members of the community had no political or economic ambitions beyond their own locality. Businessmen were rare and the only examples of Banyamulenge businessmen are possibly the late Rushambara Masiribo (who was based in Bukavu) and the Joseph

²³⁹ In 1996, he fled with his family from Kinshasa to Bujumbura via Brazzaville and Kigali. In 1999, he was forced to leave the region and died in exile in Denmark on 21 November 2000.

²⁴⁰ He was forced into exile in 1998 and is still living in France with his family.

²⁴¹ *Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes* (“Federal Republican Forces”). This is not yet registered as an official political party in the DRC.

Mutambo (who was based in Kinshasa). The rest were involved in small scale business activities. In the absence of community plans and measures to cope with socio-political emergencies, conflicts of personal interest between members began to emerge.

Surprisingly, none of these community members would accept that such interest was the result of political and/or economic ambition. But they all explained their motives as being *ishaka ry'ubgoko*²⁴² which became difficult to define. Eventually, groups of individuals from different clans began to surface, although elders of the community downplayed the significance of these groups. It is important though, to mention that members of the community who joined politics and the army had no political experience, which might have been a handicap in solving some of current community issues.

Apart from a few individuals such as Dugu wa Mulenge,²⁴³ Joseph Mutambo,²⁴⁴ and Musafiri Mushambaro,²⁴⁵ the rest who actually became politically active in 1996 came straight from university, secondary school, NGOs and the private sector. Although it could be said that they lacked public and political experience, they received their schooling in public life through the long journey of exclusion and stigmatization. The majority of them performed well and became highly competent in duties entrusted to them. And it was not surprising that after seven years (from 1996 to 2003) of armed and political struggle in the DRC, members of the community are holding various high positions in the country, both in the army and in politics.

Due to lack of cohesion and adherence to common political strategies for the survival of the community on a local, national and regional scale, any action taken by one group had a “subversive” effect on the other. In March 2002, a military confrontation involving a

²⁴² Devotion to the community.

²⁴³ He served in the provincial assembly from 1985. In 1987, he was not allowed to stand as parliamentary candidate on the grounds of being a foreigner (Banyamulenge).

²⁴⁴ Politically and economically, he evolved in Kinshasa. In 1982, he was a candidate for parliamentary election. His candidature was however turned down on the grounds that he was a foreigner (Banyamulenge).

²⁴⁵ He came from the private sector, and in 1987, his candidacy for a parliamentary seat was turned down, as was the case with Dugu wa Mulenge.

dissident RCD soldier, Commander Patrick Masunzu, and the command of the RCD led by Brigade Commander Colonel Jules Mutebutsi broke out. It started as a small misunderstanding between Commander Safari and his deputy Masunzu in their battalion at Kiziba, in Bijombo location.

After the report with findings on Commander Masunzu's insubordination, the RCD wanted his arrest to face disciplinary action. Masunzu feared prosecution, not only in respect of this incident, but was also concerned about other incidents in which he was involved, particularly his public confrontation with the Rwandan Colonel Dani Gapfizi in Uvira in January 1999. It should be noted that at this stage (1999) many misunderstandings between RCD soldiers and Rwandan soldiers with regard to military command often occurred. But Banyamulenge soldiers became outspoken.

It was at this stage that many of Banyamulenge soldiers began to desert the RCD. Among them Brigadier General Mustafa Mukiza (at the time a commander) joined the MLC²⁴⁶ of Jean Pierre Bemba, while others joined the RCD/ML²⁴⁷ of Mbusa Nyamwisi.

During the seven month conflict (war) between Masunzu and the RCD, the RPA reinforced RCD positions in Minembwe, after the RCD's retreat. Eventually, they all pulled out in September 2002 after mounting international criticism. As is the case in most wars the exact numbers of casualties on both sides have not been disclosed (Eben-Ezer Ministry International 2002). But some villages were burnt down, thousands of peasants were displaced and about 1500 head of cattle were pillaged by Rwandan soldiers.²⁴⁸

The RCD and their allies accused Masunzu of harboring Interahamwe elements, while Masunzu accused the RCD of collaborating with foreigners (Rwandan army) to invade their territory. The conflict was resolved by the signing of the peace agreement and the

²⁴⁶ *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* (Congo Liberation Movement).

²⁴⁷ *Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie/Mouvement de Libération* (Congolese Rally for Democracy).

²⁴⁸ Rwandan soldiers had given orders that any cow seen in areas controlled by Masunzu was to be slaughtered. As much as peasants tried to protect their cattle some wandered off especially at night, as they were not used to confinement. Many herds taken by soldiers were released to their owners but others provided in the Rwandan soldiers' food needs.

formation of the transitional government in 2003. But the politics of the RCD and the FRF divided the community, with some supporting Colonel Masunzu and others supporting the RCD. The main issue at stake was the fact that each group made the same claim, namely that they were fighting in the interest of the community and/or the country in general. These internal divisions made the community even more vulnerable.

Colonel Masunzu²⁴⁹ maintained control of Minembwe territory and was supported by the Kabila government. Leadership ambitions however, caused Colonel Masunzu's group to split into two factions: the Masunzu and the Aaron Nyamushebga factions. Colonel Nyamushebga controlled the Bibogobogo location in Fizi territory, while Colonel Masunzu remained in Minembwe.²⁵⁰ This followed the earlier disintegration of the FRF as a result of lack of political confidence the party experienced from 1999. Even when the other Congolese politicians, rebel movements and representatives of civil society convened at Sun City, in South Africa for peace talks in 2002, the FRF remained absent.

The war of the RCD and Masunzu exposed yet another political difference among the Banyamulenge members within the RCD. They were divided into two groups on issues of political independence: one group was busy forging a sense of political independence while the other group wanted to maintain close dependency on members of the RPA. Among the many examples of this rift, an incident involving pastor Bitebetebe Rusingizwa of the Methodist church can be cited. He was arrested in August 2002 by RCD security services in Minembwe. Still at war, Banyamulenge members of the RCD organized a courtesy visit of Banyamulenge elders and pastors to Rwanda.

²⁴⁹ In August 2004, Colonel Masunzu was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General and he was officially sworn in July 2005.

²⁵⁰ Both factions however greatly lacked in the necessary political leadership to translate their military convictions into a long term socio-political framework, which would have ensured reconciliation and security, not only of their own community, but that of all the different communities living together and for the region.

The purpose of the visit was to explain to the Rwandans and their leaders that the Banyamulenge community was not part of the happenings in Minembwe²⁵¹. After their reconciliatory talks, the delegation returned to Minembwe. Pastor Bitebetebe, who like many other elders had opposed the RCD's decision to go to war was suspected of collaborating with Masunzu. Upon the mission's arrival back in Minembwe, he was arrested and sent to Goma where he had been as a member of the official delegation of elders. This caught the RCD executive power off guard. The embarrassment that followed revealed the discord between the security department and the executive, both led by members of the Banyamulenge community.

Much reconciliation must still take place for the relationship within the community itself, between the community and other neighboring communities, and that between Congolese and Rwandans to be repaired. This can only be achieved through proper political, economic and social structures that would give preference to human dignity and justice. As long as issues of poverty, land and insecurity are not yet properly dealt with, there cannot be an end to the war in the Congo and in the region.

3.9 Summary

Colonialism affected Banyamulenge traditional way of living, particularly, it contributed greatly to their political vulnerability by suppressing their traditional rights of land access. Christianity helped the community to raise their level of aspiration and investment in future life by educating their children, and there has been a cultural and community living transformation. Christianity also created more strength and leadership in the Banyamulenge community to defend their own fundamental rights, identity and integrity as a people.

²⁵¹ However, those who were opposed to the RCD were of the opinion that the visit was of a more political nature in favor of the RCD and its ally. One month later, the RPA withdrew from Minembwe and eventually from the Eastern Congo. Whether this was a political or a humanitarian mission, it has to some extent managed to restore relations between the Banyamulenge community and their Rwandan brothers. At the same time, Masunzu's control of Minembwe forged some alliances with other local tribal militia, especially from the Babembe and Bafuliru tribes. This alliance protected the villagers from ethnically motivated conflicts and attacks in Minembwe territory.

In spite of the fact that Christianity brought significant improvements in the life of the community, it was also responsible for creating leadership competition and dividing the community into several denominational and religious groups. Conflict of old values, beliefs and habits were so deep-rooted among the people that they were put in dilemma, and found themselves oscillating between Christianity and old ways through which were permanently dislocated.

Involvement of Banyamulenge youths and politicians in Congolese rebellions has been part of expression of their Congolese identity. But divisions around and within the Banyamulenge community are to be understood in light of both Congolese and regional social and political context right from colonialism to independence and thereafter.