

# Welcome – Mulisanze - Willkommen!

The restructuring of the Rwandan society  
during colonialism -

The dominant historiography is the history of  
those who are in rule

Die herrschende Geschichte ist die Geschichte der  
Herrschenden

July 5, 2016, University of Frankfurt

academic experience worldwide & Imbuto e.V.

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# Table of content

- Why this topic?
- The role of colonialism
- The scramble for Africa
- Those who tell the story
- The Catholic Church
- The ethnicisation and ethnogenesis
- The political turn -> the „social revolution“
- After the colonial period -> 1990-1994
- Conclusion

# RWANDA in the heart of Africa



# Why this topic?

In 1994, one of the most cruel genocide and massive violence in the last century was organised during 100 days in Rwanda, about 800.000 persons killed.

Victims were mainly people of the so-called “ethnic” group Batutsi and much less of the Bahutu and Batwa groups.



# The influence of colonialism

How the colonial period, first by Germans, then by Belgium until 1962, has contributed to a widely restructuring of the political, social, economic and cultural systems and the reinforcing of social identities?

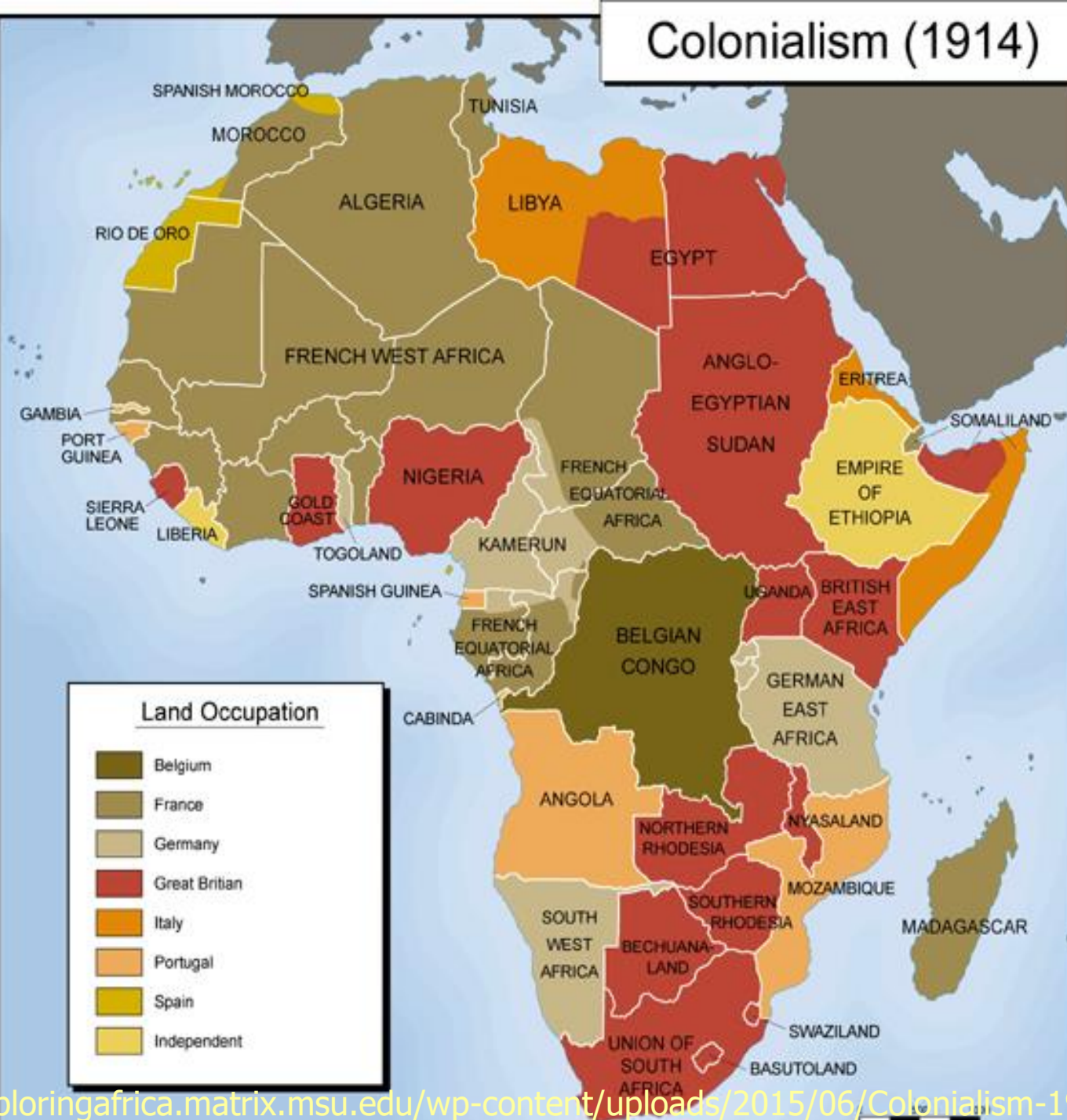
# The scramble for Africa

- The Berlin Conference of 1884 (Congo Conference) assigned the territory to Germany as part of **German East Africa** (Burundi, Rwanda, Tanganyika), marking the beginning of the colonial era by European Countries

(Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, German Empire, UK, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russian Empire, Spain, Sweden-Norway + USA, Ottoman Empire)

- With the arrival of European Colonisers in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and French Catholic Missionaries in 1900, the “invention of tradition” took place in the Great Lakes Region.

# Colonialism (1914)



## Those who tell the story

The Great Lakes Region's history in Central-Africa (political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual) was transmitted by oral traditions

and widely influenced by the intent of the tellers.

As in every region history is not fixed but dynamic .

# Catholic Church

From the perception, based on race theories (prevailing in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century -> Shoah) of the mainly French Missionaries, the country's history was written that accompanied the implementation of colonial administration.

Archbishop Lavigérie, founder and head of the "Society of the Missionaries of Africa"

"White fathers", France -> Algeria

->Great Lakes Region -> Rwanda 1900



Cathedral in Astrida -> Butare -> Huye),  
devoted to the Belgian Queen Astrida



# Ethnicisation

The Christianisation “civilisation” of society accompanied by a decline of genuine culture, change of former rules and power sharing, beliefs, social cohesion, values and cultural practice, lead to an “ethnicisation” of the population based on racist stereotypes and unscientific theories (based on the bible – Hamitic thesis).

The members of the Batutsi groups were considered as superior to the other groups (hamites, master-race - Herrenmenschen), those of the Bahutu groups were stigmatised as subjects (Untertanen, bantu-population, negroes) and the Batwa as a subhuman race.

# Ethnogenesis

- Individual identity cards introduced in 1930 included “ethnic” (Ubwoko) categorisation for the Rwandan population.
- This contributed to an “ethnogenesis” stigmatising the population through a division in superior and inferior groups and a strong centralisation of power, now held by a small group of Batutsi.
- This process was accompanied by creating and reproducing myths on origin, migration, and characters influencing self-esteem, self-image, and the perception of others.



Traditional house

Igisoro



# The political turn

In the 1950ties the support of the rigid political and social system by the Belgian administrators and the Catholic Church shifted from the support of the Batutsi population, now considered **as oppressors**, to the support of the majority of the population, the Bahutu.



# November 1, 1959 The „Social“ Revolution

## The 1950ties:

- independence  
mouvements in Africa -  
> Political parties,  
Parmehutu, UNAR, Aprosoma,  
Rader
- 1959 Archbishop - André  
Perraudin
- Uprising of „Bahutu“-  
groups -> Massacres of  
Batutsi
- General elections (UN) -  
> 1962 political  
indepedance

King Baudouin (Belgium) und Kigeri  
Rudahigwa (Rwanda)



# The overthrow of the regime

Corresponding to this social reorganisation and ethnicisation the “social revolution” of 1959, lead to the independence from Belgium (1962) and the overthrow of the ruling regime.

The conflicts over power that were bound to ethnic identities became more and more hardened and rigid.

During this time a lot of Batutsi fled in neighbouring countries (Uganda, Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania).

## After the colonial Period

In 1962 the first republic was founded, widely dominated by Bahutu-groups from Central-Rwanda.

This regime was overthrown in 1973, after violent conflicts affecting the Batutsi population, by Bahutu-groups of the North.

The situation in the neighbouring country Burundi influenced widely the situation in Rwanda and vice versa.

# 1990-1994

October 1, 1990 a group of descendants of the population, who fled Rwanda in the 1950ties - 1970ties, living in Uganda, attacked Rwanda. The Batutsi living in Rwanda were declared "enemies" "ibytso" = collaborators.

This was the beginning of the war lasting till the beginning of the Genocide and numerous crimes against humanity in April 1994.



# Conclusion

For all Rwandans, the most important identity is to be Rwandan – **Banyarwanda**

„Ethnic“ identities? Same language, same culture and religion, sharing the same territory, intermarriage – but the stereotypes are widely reproduced by international media, politicians and researchers

Official narrative on history – individual narrative: big discrepancy

1994 -> „ethnicisation“ of guilt (Bahutu as perpetrators) and Batutsi as victims

-> denial of other mass murderings

For a better future – our aim is to shape the future,  
focusing on looking more forward than backward.



Thank you for  
your attention!

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zum Fest Aïd! Aïd MABROUK!

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