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Gender-Based Violence and Submerged Histories:  
A Colonial Genealogy of Violence Against Tutsi Women in the  
1994 Rwandan Genocide

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Gender Studies

by

Helina Asmelash Beyene

2014



## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Gender-Based Violence and Submerged Histories:  
A Colonial Genealogy of Violence Against Tutsi Women in the  
1994 Rwandan Genocide

by

Helina Asmelash Beyene

Doctor of Philosophy in Gender Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Sondra Hale, Chair

My dissertation is a genealogical study of gender-based violence (GBV) during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. A growing body of feminist scholarship argues that GBV in conflict zones results mainly from a continuum of patriarchal violence that is condoned outside the context of war in everyday life. This literature, however, fails to account for colonial and racial histories that also inform the politics of GBV in African conflicts. My project examines the question of the colonial genealogy of GBV by grounding my inquiry within postcolonial, transnational and intersectional feminist frameworks that center race, historicize violence, and decolonize knowledge production. I employ interdisciplinary methods that include (1) discourse analysis of the gender-based violence of Belgian rule and Tutsi women's iconography in colonial texts; (2)

textual analysis of the constructions of Tutsi women's sexuality and fertility in key official documents on overpopulation and Tutsi refugees in colonial and post-independence Rwanda; and (3) an ethnographic study that included leading anti gendered violence activists based in Kigali, Rwanda, to assess how African feminists account for the colonial legacy of gendered violence in the 1994 genocide.

My findings reveal that highly sexualized colonial ideologies such as the Hamitic Hypothesis, not only marked the Tutsi population as non-indigenous, non-black invaders, but also codified Tutsi female sexuality and fertility as a beguiling, non-indigenous threat to the natural population of the land. The colonial era provided the lexicon that staged Tutsi sexuality within the blueprint of African indigeneity, which the post-independence Rwandan state reassembled in its discourses surrounding overpopulation, refugees and national security. Such discursive consolidation positioned Tutsi women's sexuality as biopolitical threats to the national security of the indigenous population, making them high stakes targets in state crises.

My ethnographic study further reveals that Rwandan activists offer explanations that capture the intersection of empire and patriarchy in the making of GBV in African conflicts like the Rwandan genocide of 1994. While Rwandan women's rights advocates tend to deploy human rights and patriarchy discourses like their western counterparts, the activists provide multiple and more complex articulations that historicize GBV and implicate sites that go beyond patriarchal culture alone. They identify the colonial, the post-colonial as well as the pre-colonial era as sites in the making of Tutsi rapability. The study calls for feminist interpretative frameworks that extend beyond single-axis explanation of GBV that do not naturalize the nation-state and resist global imperial expansion in the name of addressing GBV.

This dissertation of Helina Asmelash Beyene is approved.

Esha De

Sandra Harding

Andrea Smith

Sondra Hale, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

## **DEDICATION**

For Mommy and Ash who never questioned my choices.

For my sisters, Hiriti and Beza, one chosen for me and one I got to choose.

For Mary Elizabeth Bass Brayant who left this earth to become my spirit guide.

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# VITA

## EDUCATION

**University of California, Los Angeles:** PhD, Gender Studies, June 2014

**Tufts University:** Graduate work in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, 1998–2000

**University of Cincinnati:** MA, Women's Studies, June 1998

**Truman State University:** BS, Justice Systems; Minor, Women's Studies, May 1996

## AWARDS

2012-2013: UCLA Center for the Study of Women Dissertation Year Fellowship

2011–2012: UCLA Department of Women's Studies Dissertation Fellowship

2010–2011: UCLA Dean's Fellowship,

2010–2011: UCLA International Institute Dissertation Fieldwork Fellowship

2008: UCLA International Institute Preliminary Fieldwork Fellowship

2007–2008: UCLA Department of Women's Studies Fellowship

2006–2008: Pauley Foundation Fellowship

2006 and 2007: UCLA Chancellor's University Summer Fellowship

2005–2006: UCLA Chancellor's University Fellowship

## PRESENTATIONS

“‘A Cockroach Cannot Give Birth to a Butterfly’ Overpopulation and Refugee Discourses As Colonial Precursors of Gender-Based Violence in the Rwandan Genocide.” *The Third Annual Conference by International Feminist Journal of Politics*, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, May 11, 2014

“Colonial Complicities in Gender-Based Violence in African Conflicts: The Rwandan Case.” *National Women's Studies Annual Association*, Oakland, CA, November 11, 2012

“Forgotten Genealogies of Gender Based Violence in African Conflict Zones.” *Women and Society Conference*, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY, October 20, 2012

“Fragmented Representation and Colonial Archives: Tutsi Women and Representation During Belgian Rule.” *National Women’s Studies Annual Association*, Atlanta, Georgia, November 12, 2011

“Belgian Colonialism and Gender-Based Violence: A Genealogical Reading of Violence Against Women in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.” *Gender, Art, and Social Movements in the Middle East and Global South*, UCLA, October 28, 2011

“Transnational and Postcolonial Feminist Interpretations of Gender-Based Violence.” *African Activist Association Conference*, UCLA, May 15, 2010

“Intersectionality, Gender-Based Violence and Conflict Zones.” *Fourth Annual Critical Race Studies Symposium*, UCLA School of Law, March 11, 2010

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

*English Composition*, UCLA Writing Programs: Spring and Fall 2013, Winter 2014

*Knowledge*, UCLA: UCLA Department of Gender Studies, Summer 2012

*Race, Gender, Nation and Conflict Zones*, UCLA Department of Gender Studies: Spring 2010



# CHAPTER 1

## REFRAMING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT ZONES: OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

### 1.1 Introduction

In the early 200s, my family relocated from Ethiopia to Rwanda giving me a chance to visit the central African region. During those visits, I found my Ethiopian identity woven into the story of the genocide in surprising ways, which sparked my interest in gender-based violence in the Rwandan genocide and in conflict zones at large. I found myself followed by the Hamitic Hypothesis, the colonial theory that held that all forms of African civilization were the handy work of non-black Hamitic people who migrated into Africa. This theory viewed a range of African people including Egyptians, Tutsis and Ethiopians as descendants of these so-called Hamitic civilizers. But I admit I was not fully aware of Ethiopia's inclusion in this myth since growing up in Ethiopia, a country that prides itself from escaping the clutches of colonialism, I was not as steeped in such colonial narratives.

From the day I arrived in Rwanda I became Hamiticized and legible to those I encountered in ways I had never considered but deeply unsettled me. Soldiers inspecting my passport at Kigali airport excitedly told me that they, too, were Ethiopians. When my family and I went to visit the newly built national genocide memorial museum, which was closed to the public at the time, our Ethiopian passports generated some interest among the soldiers guarding the place who decided to grant us a private tour. I heard the Hamitic myth repeated even by high-ranking military officials who, while denying the legitimacy of ethnicity in Rwanda, simultaneously insisted that Tutsis migrated from Ethiopia, citing cattle movement patterns, flora

and fauna as well as physical distinctiveness of people across the eastern Africa. In a country where ethnic identities are banned, it was striking to experience a constant invocation of an ethnic affinity, especially one based on such a colonially informed one such as Hamiticism. Although I assumed most of the comments I encountered were by people who at one time might have been considered Tutsi, there were also comments from people who saw me as Rwandan but not necessarily as Hamitic. I admit that some of my family members and I resembled some people in Rwanda and there were times when our signification as Rwandan were quite funny and not politically charged like the time when a man scolded me for what seemed like an eternity for forgetting how to speak Kinyarwanda and becoming Americanized. After letting him finish his reprimand, which I was receiving through a translator who never bothered to tell him I was not Rwandan, I explained that I was actually Ethiopian. He was quite embarrassed and I was thoroughly amused.

When I reflected on the presumption of a Tutsi-Ethiopian kinship with my Ethiopian and Eritrean family and friends in Rwanda, I realized that Rwandan versions of Hamitic connection to Ethiopian lineage would not even correlate Ethiopia's own myth of non-black heritage. In this story, the Tutsi were said to have come from southern Ethiopia. But within Ethiopia's imperial historical context, the region's people were disparaged as "uncivilized blacks" and subjected to civilizing conquests by northern highlanders who saw themselves as heirs of Biblical King Solomon. In colonial racial mythology that lingered in Rwanda, southern Ethiopians were framed as Ethiopian Hamites. I began wondering how the story of one people could have diametrically opposed interpretations.

My trip also quickly taught me that my pan-African feminist political orientation formed in the context of diaspora was incapable of grasping the complexity of the area's politics and the

genocide. This was a war between Africans who thought of their struggle as the liberation of blacks, which in this case meant Hutus and black feminist paradigm was failing me in making sense of the area's politics. While I was familiar with the circulation of Ethiopianess in diaspora in movements such as Ras Tafariism,<sup>1</sup> I was unfamiliar with Ethiopianess as a volatile and dangerous subject position outside of the context of the wars in the horn of Africa. I repeatedly found myself embroiled in the story of the Tutsi and the genocide in ways that highlighted how the circulation of origin stories, claims of African indigeneity and the politics of racialization follow contradictory routes and embroil multiple spaces and temporalities.

The narrative of Tutsis hailing from my homeland continued to follow me in neighboring Burundi as well. While a male Ethiopian friend and I were preparing to travel to from Bujumbura, to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2004, we were repeatedly warned not to venture too far beyond the border. Neither Burundi nor the DRC were politically stable yet and Burundi enforced nightly curfews. We were told to hurry back because otherwise we could easily be mistaken for Tutsi and possibly attacked. I was especially warned to take care because of rampant sexual violence in the DRC. Warnings came even from Ethiopian soldiers working for African Union's peacekeeping mission in Burundi, who also told stories about how Ethiopian peacekeeping soldiers had once been a political liability during the Rwandan genocide, a fact corroborated by General Romeo Dallaire, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). Dallaire recalled in his memoir that the Ethiopian peacekeeping soldiers

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<sup>1</sup>The Ras Tafari movement began in Jamaica in the 1930. It is a Afrocentric religious and political movement that was highly influence by the early writings of Marcus Garvey and his return-to-Africa philosophy. Adherents believe that Emperor Haile Silassie I of Ethiopia, who at the time of the movement's emergence was Africa's only Black monarch, was a black messiah who descended from Biblical King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. The movement found international fame with the advent of Reggae music and Bob Marley, and adherent of Ras Tafariism are now found all over the world. See Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians: With a New Afterword* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997).

who joined his forces posed a challenge because there were some concerns among the United Nations peacekeeping officers that “Rwanda Hutus might take Ethiopian peacekeepers the wrong way, as they were viewed as being genetically linked to the Tutsis.”<sup>2</sup>

I admit that at the time I thought the warnings in Burundi were exaggerations and the fact life went on as normal during our trip was a confirmation of my belief. Eventually though, I began to think seriously about how Ethiopianness and Tutsiness, discursively linked via the Hamitic myth, came to signal rapability. The Ethiopian Soldiers in Burundi were not warning us only of the war. They were also worried because Tutsi womanhood increased the likelihood of sexual violence. Back in Rwanda, women’s rights activists and women who survived the genocide told me stories about during rapes, they were referred to as Ethiopian women or told to go back to their homeland through a tributary river to the Nile whose source is in Ethiopia. Given the colonial roots of the Hamitic myth, I began to wonder how Hamiticism became a sexualized construct and the extent to which rape in ethnic conflicts in ex-colonial settings was had a colonial connection.

Given my own embroilment in the colonial legacy of gender-based violence in Rwanda, when I decided to pursue these questions in my dissertation, I was struck by the dominant feminist interpretation of GBV in conflict zones that overwhelmingly noted global patriarchal culture as its cause. In 2008, I took preliminary research trip to Rwanda and met with Rwandan women’s groups working against gendered violence. Their accounts of why the 1994 genocide targeted Tutsi women for extensive sexual violence gestured not only to nationalist and patriarchal politics but also to a colonial past. They articulated gender-based violence in conflict zones in markedly different way than the way the prevailing feminist literature on GBV and

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<sup>2</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York, NY; Berkeley, CA: Carroll & Graf; 2005), 393.

conflict in the west framed the issue. I began to suspect that the Rwandan genocide and its pervasive sexual violence could not be sufficiently captured by regional or global patriarchy frameworks alone. It was imperative to have a genealogical approach to the study of GBV in the context of ex-colonial states.

## 1.2 My Argument

The Twentieth Century was marked by an endless cycle of wars that used women's bodies as weapons. These acts of violence are often understood as gender-based violence (GBV), a catch all phrase that refers to a slew of crimes including domestic violence, dowry-related violence, early marriage, female genital circumcision, female infanticide, femicide, forced marriage, honor killings, spouse rape, sex selection, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment, sexual violence, and trafficking in persons among others.<sup>3</sup> In conflict zones, rape, sex trafficking, forced marriages and concubinage tend to be the most common forms of GBV. Although there have been increased reports of violence, including sexual ones, against men and boys,<sup>4</sup> women and girls have tended to be the main targets of GBV.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, ethnic conflicts and genocides have been particularly notorious in routinizing GBV.

While international laws often acknowledge ethnic, religious or national crimes in conflicts such as genocides, they have historically ignored the salience of gender crimes in these

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<sup>3</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *A Guide to Programming Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Activities. Gender-Based Violence, Draft*. (USAID Working Group, April 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Adam Jones, *Gender Inclusive: Essays on Violence, Men, and Feminist International Relations*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Kelly Dawn. Askin, "Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law: Extraordinary Advances, Enduring Obstacles.," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 21, no. 2 (2003): 288–349.

conflicts.<sup>6</sup> As feminist legal scholar Rhonda Copelon notes, sexual violence is “among the most vehemently resisted aspects of international criminal law.”<sup>7</sup> It was not until 1998 that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ruled for the first time that rape is an instrument of genocide.<sup>8</sup> Despite the failure of international legal instruments to address GBV in conflict zones, feminist scholars and activists have been addressing the issue since the 1970s. Susan Brownmiller’s seminal book, *Against Our Will*, made one of the earliest connections between sexual violence and mass conflicts, offering a nuanced discussion of sexual violence in wars, pogroms, revolutions, and genocides.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Holocaust survivors were also breaking their silence and offering feminist analysis of Holocaust.<sup>10</sup> The eruption of GBV in ethnic conflicts such as Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Darfur and the DRC in 1990s and 2000s has intensified feminist efforts to understand why women are ubiquitously used as weapons of war in conflict zones.

While dominant feminist analyses have been intellectually and politically productive, they have not had much to say about the connections between colonial and racial histories in conflict zones where GBV has been ubiquitous. In the context of Africa, where many of the conflicts are a result of complex ethnic, racial and economic dynamics, explanations that reduce GBV to a universal patriarchal culture fail to capture the overlapping and co-constituted

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<sup>6</sup> Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law.”

<sup>7</sup> Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (London, UK; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998); S. Lillian Kremer, *Women’s Holocaust Writing: Memory and Imagination* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> International Tribunal for Rwanda, *The Prosecutor Versus Jean-Paul Akayesu* (The Hague, Netherlands: United Nations ICTR, 1998), <http://www.unicttr.org/Portals/0/Case%5CEnglish%5CAkayesu%5Cjudgement%5Cakay001.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Baumel-Schwartz, *Double Jeopardy*; Kremer, *Women’s Holocaust Writing*.

structures of power on the continent. In many African conflicts such as the Rwandan genocide, Darfur and the DRC, the colonial era's importance site in codifying gender-based violence<sup>11</sup> remains overlooked.

In this dissertation, I examine the colonial role by grounding questions of GBV in African conflict zones within postcolonial and transnational feminist frameworks. Specifically, I explore how during the 1994 Rwandan genocide GBV was set in motion partly by colonialism. The 1994 genocide has gained notoriety as one of the worst conflicts both in terms overall extermination of an ethnic group as well as the systemic use of GBV.<sup>12</sup> While patriarchy was certainly a factor in the widespread use of GBV against Tutsi women in the genocide, I argue that the Rwandan case resists explanations that reduce GBV to patriarchal causes. Through an exploration of the gender politics of colonial rule and the post-independence, nationalist Rwandan state, I show how the constitution of Tutsi women as rapable during the genocide was a continuum of not only of patriarchal violence but also of colonial violence.

### **1.3 Significance of the Project**

By subjecting GBV in the Rwandan genocide to a genealogical inquiry, this project illuminates how the colonial reshaping of indigeneity was accomplished by epistemic and institutional violence against women. It shows how violence against women was an important precursor to the politics of belonging in the region. It also highlights how post-independence African states like Rwanda failed to dismantle these colonial terms of indigeneity, sovereignty and citizenship

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<sup>11</sup> Amina Mama, "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 46–62; Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon: Of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath* (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 1996).

that marked certain women as inherent threats to the body politic of the state. More broadly, this project destabilizes dominant anti-GBV narratives that reproduce colonizing discourses of gendered violence in conflicts of the global south.

In order to probe the complex factors that inform violence against women, this project brings into dialogue a number of intellectual fields including genocide studies, African studies, feminist transnational and postcolonial studies as well as women of color feminisms. Additionally, the project is concerned with contemporary events like the Rwandan genocide, and therefore has relevance for policy-formation including policies regarding intervention and post-conflict reconstruction. Finally, this project offers a roadmap for thinking about anti-violence projects in ways that do not naturalize the state or align with imperial projects under the guise of women's rights.

#### **1.4 Brief Historical Background of Rwanda and the 1994 Genocide**

The Republic of Rwanda (Rwanda) is a land-locked central African nation bordered by the Republic of Burundi (Burundi), the Republic of Uganda (Uganda), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the United Republic of Tanzania (Tanzania). Until the late 1890s, it was ruled by a feudal monarchy that revolved around a king known as the *Mwami*.<sup>13</sup> Economic and social life revolved around agriculture and cattle herding, the latter holding significant power. The feudal era involved complex ethnic hierarchies but they were negotiated within a range of social networks, such as family heritage, regional affiliations and military alliance, making

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<sup>13</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988).



ethnic distinctions porous and shifting.<sup>14</sup> For instance, wealth and cattle ownership as well as marriage could reinvent Hutus as Tutsis.<sup>15</sup> The depth of social meaning of these categories also varied regionally. In the north, where colonial rules as well as the rule of the *Mwami* were weak, ethnic boundaries tended to be firm, whereas in the south where intermarriages and inter-ethnic coexistence was extensive, ethnic lines tended to blur.<sup>16</sup> Although porous, the social categories of Tutsi and Hutu did mark meaningful social hierarchies in Rwanda long before the arrival of colonial rule. Tutsi identity was associated with wealth, power and higher social standing.<sup>17</sup> But it was the arrival of colonial rule that transformed and foreclosed these identities into racial categories.<sup>18</sup>

Colonialism arrived in the region 1899 after the Berlin conference of 1884 gave Germany the territory of Ruanda-Urundi (the area including modern day independent nations, Rwanda and Burundi). Ruanda-Urundi remained a part of German East Africa until 1919, when Germany was defeated in World War I and lost its colonial territories. Belgium, which had been ruling Belgian Congo since 1877, took control of Ruanda-Urundi under a League of Nations trusteeship and it until 1959 when Rwanda became independent.

Although Belgian rule lasted barely forty years, it significantly altered the socio-economic landscape of Rwandan society. Its most dramatic change was the transformation of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*.

<sup>16</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*; Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: NY; Washington, DC; London, UK; Brussels, Belgium: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 4 (2001): 651–64.

ethnic identities into racial prototypes, designating the Tutsi as non-black settlers, the Hutu as a negroid prototype and Twa as an original pygmy people.<sup>19</sup> Although when the Belgians took over the Tutsi rulers were their formidable enemies. Through a series of coups and manipulation, the Tutsis were subsequently converted into colonial allies. The Belgians deposed the anti-colonial monarch and replaced him with his young and inexperienced son. It was at this point that the Tutsi were reinvented as a racial group and installed at the top of the social and political hierarchy of the region. The new rulers became executioners of unpopular colonial policies such as arbitrary tax laws and unpaid and coercive labor systems known as *corvée*,<sup>20</sup> tasks for which they would long be remembered by their subordinates.<sup>21</sup> Although the Tutsi had historically been an anti-colonial group who were not easy to subdue, the Belgians managed to turn Tutsi rulers into proxies of indirect rule.<sup>22</sup>

The Belgians codified race sciences into every aspect of their administration. They carried out a phenotypically driven census, officially calcifying racial hierarchies between Tutsi and Hutu. They also undertook historical and anthropological studies that promulgated theories of migration and indigeneity of Rwanda's people and sanctioned the Hamitic Hypothesis as a legitimate scientific theory.<sup>23</sup> According to this theory, African societies that had centralized

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<sup>19</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*; Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of A Genocide* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>21</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>22</sup> Richard F. Nyrop, *Rwanda: A Country Study* (Department of the Army, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Nigel Eltringham, "'Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country': The Hamitic Hypothesis, Race and the Rwandan Genocide," *Social Identities* 12, no. 4 (2006): 425–46; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Edith R. Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis; Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 10, no. 4 (January 1, 1969): 521–32.

forms of rule were built by the descendants of middle-eastern or Europe civilizers.<sup>24</sup> In biblical parlance, they were descendants of Ham, one of Noah's sons who presumably populated Africa. The Tutsis' history was rewritten within this story of Hamitic descent and was disseminated in the popular imagination by the Catholic schools that treated the theory as historical and religious truth and instituted it in schools, which it dominated.<sup>25</sup>

Like much of the continent, by the 1950s Ruanda-Urundi was undergoing social transformation. In 1959, Rwanda's first political party, the *Parti du Mouvement de L'émancipation Hutu* (PARMEHUTU) was launched on a platform of emancipating the indigenous black Hutu population from Belgian and Tutsi rule.<sup>26</sup> Rwanda formally gained independence from Belgium on July 1, 1962. Rwanda and Burundi also became separate countries and PARMEHUTU founder, Grégoire Kayibanda, a Hutu from the ethnically mixed southern region, was elected Rwanda's first president.

The political uprisings of the Hutu political elite and the deposition of the Tutsi royal court in 1959 led to the mass exodus of Tutsi exiles into neighboring countries. In 1961, Tutsi refugees based in Burundi attempted an armed return to Rwanda. The Rwandan government retaliated by attacking the Tutsi population within Rwanda, causing an estimated 20,000 mostly Tutsi deaths.<sup>27</sup> In 1973, political fallout within PARAMHUTU led to a coup that ousted President Kayibanda. General Juvenal Habyarimana from the Hutu-dominated and historically independent northern region took power. In 1975, President Habyarimana formed a new party,

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<sup>24</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>25</sup> Eltringham, "Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country"; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>26</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>27</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 61.

the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MNRD), and remained its leader until his assassination on April 6, 1994.<sup>28</sup>

Although during Habyarimana's early years were marked by a desire to reconcile Tutsi-Hutu divisions within the country, he remained hostile to refugees and his reign continued to produce Tutsi refugees.<sup>29</sup> When coffee prices plummeted in the 1970s, the government was faced with pressure from western financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to enact austerity plans.<sup>30</sup> The economic turmoil also gave rise to internal political shifts. Political dissidents including those who wished to introduce democratic reforms and multi party rule as well as those who wanted a more extremist and purist Hutu nation also began putting pressure on the regime. Broke and under pressure from internal dissent, the government ignored the plight of Tutsi refugees. It often cited overpopulation as a reason for why it could not repatriate the Tutsi refugees.<sup>31</sup> In the 1980s, the government veered further and further toward extremist politics, turning not only on Rwandan refugees but also on Tutsi citizens within Rwanda's borders.<sup>32</sup>

The lack of political solution to the refugee problem led Tutsi refugees in Uganda to align themselves with rebel forces fighting then Ugandan President Milton Obote.<sup>33</sup> In 1986, along with the Rwandan refugees, the Ugandan rebel forces led by Yoweri Museveni ousted Obote

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<sup>28</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>29</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>30</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>31</sup> Roger Winter, "Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda: The Banyarwanda Tragedy," *World Refugee Survey*, Arlington, VA: UN Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>33</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

from power. In return for their military support, Museveni promised to adopt new citizenship laws based on residency, which would grant citizenship to most of the Tutsi refugees who had been born in Uganda and had never set foot on Rwandan soil.<sup>34</sup> No African country could escape the politics of the cold war and the neoliberal globalization, however. The global collapse of oil and coffee markets in the 1970s intensified the pressure on Rwanda as well as every African nation to devalue its currency and implement structural adjustment policies. This policy continued for the next decade and in 1990, the IMF and the French Treasury forced Rwanda to devalue the Rwandan franc by fifty percent.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Rwanda, which was often labeled an over-populated and environmentally-at-risk nation by the major multilateral organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, began framing the return of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi refugees as an environmental crisis. Embroiled in ethnic politics, the state framed the refugee question as a question of indigeneity and made political scapegoats out of the refugees.<sup>36</sup>

When Uganda's President Museveni reneged on his promise to extend residency to Tutsi refugees living in Uganda, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), a military group composed of these former soldiers, crossed from southern Uganda into northern Rwanda On October 1, 1991. Although eventually repelled by the Rwandan army, the RPF dealt a psychological and military blow to the Rwandan government. The RPF's military might led to a flurry of UN mediated negotiations known as the Arusha Accords whose objectives included the return of Tutsi refugees to Rwanda and power-sharing between the government and the RPF.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities."

<sup>35</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

The RPF invasion intensified the racialization of the Rwandan Tutsi refugees as well as the Tutsis within Rwandan borders.<sup>38</sup> Hutu nationalism reached a fever pitch and pogroms against Tutsis became commonplace.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, in neighboring Burundi, ethnic political turmoil mirrored Rwanda's. But there the Tutsi-dominated military targeted and displaced Hutu civilians.<sup>40</sup> The regional crisis revived Hutu power ideology in Rwanda and reanimated extremists within the government, the army, and the newly formed political parties.<sup>41</sup> The political will to enact the Arusha Accords was turning into a pipe dream.<sup>42</sup>

On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying President Habyarimana and the Burundian president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was shot down, killing both men. As if on cue, a systematic extermination campaign of Tutsis and moderate Hutus ensued throughout Rwanda. The genocide, which lasted one hundred days and ended when the RPF took control of the country in June 1994, left close to one million people dead. Almost the entire Tutsi population as well as thousands of Hutu opponents of extremist politics perished. The conflict also created the biggest refugee crisis the region had ever seen. Two million Hutu refugees, including most of the genocide perpetrators, crossed the border into the DRC.<sup>43</sup> The ensuing battle to repatriate these refugees led Rwanda to invade the DRC in 1998, a war that became known as Africa's World War.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>39</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>40</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>41</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

<sup>42</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>43</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>44</sup> Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

The Rwandan genocide also became notable for its extensive and systematic use of rape and other forms of gender-based violence, mostly against Tutsi women and girls. According to Human Rights Watch's comprehensive study of the genocide, an estimated 250,000 Tutsi women and girls was raped.<sup>45</sup> And many were subjected to sexual slavery, humiliation and other forms of sexual torture. According to the study, rape was also systematically used to infect Tutsi women with HIV/AIDS for prolonged death. Forced impregnations were also reported as a way to transmit HIV/AIDS.<sup>46</sup> Tutsi women were also violated as a way to torment members of their families and as well to punish them for their presumed haughtiness and sexual unavailability to Hutu men.<sup>47</sup> And rape was used as a tool of punishing Tutsi women for being the carriers of the future Tutsi race and for posing an inherent danger to state's purity and security.<sup>48</sup>

Since the end of the Rwandan genocide, the new government led by Paul Kagame has suspended the use of ethnic categories, viewing them as colonial inventions. It has adopted a platform of national unity and reconciliation, treating ethnic distinctions such as Hutu, Twa, and Tutsi as colonial inventions.<sup>49</sup> The government has also emerged as a leader in gender mainstreaming. The 2003 constitution set a quota of one-third seats in Parliament to be reserved for women as a remedy for the exclusionary practices of the past.<sup>50</sup> In 2006, women comprised

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<sup>45</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Shattered Lives*.

<sup>47</sup> Jennie E Burnet, "Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990–2001): Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent, and the Political Economy of War," *African Studies Review African Studies Review* 55, no. 2 (2012): 97–118.

<sup>48</sup> Cynthia Enloe, "When Feminists Think About Rwanda," *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, April 30, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> "The Constitution of The Republic Of Rwanda." <http://www.rwandahope.com/constitution.pdf>. (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Legal and Constitutional Commission, Republic of Rwanda. Provision Relating to Gender Equality in the Constitution. Kigali.

nearly fifty percent of the Rwandan parliament.<sup>51</sup> By 2013, this number stood at 64 percent, the highest in the world.<sup>52</sup> The Rwandan constitution now recognizes a myriad of gender equity issues such as property and inheritance rights, freedom of movement, employment rights.<sup>53</sup> Since the end of the genocide, women's groups with the support of a responsive government have also initiated an array of anti-GBV programming and gender empowerment initiatives.<sup>54</sup> There are numerous new laws that address GB and sexual violence is now a crime punishable by law, carrying a term of five to ten years in prison and even possible death penalty.<sup>55</sup> The constitution also recognizes places sexual violence in the highest of genocidal crime categories and views it as "sexual torture."

While post-genocide Rwanda has made unparalleled strides to address many forms of gender based discrimination including GBV, to portray it as a country of gender equality is to miss the country's complex relationship to the region's conflicts and the extensive deployment of GBV in them. The end of the Rwandan genocide set off an even deadlier war in the DRC, when the genocide perpetrators fled to the DRC. The UN and other international aid agencies then uncritically framed this group within the typical trope of refugee as victim<sup>56</sup> even though the

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<sup>51</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Gender-Based Violence Programming in Rwanda: Actors, Activities, Collaborations, Coordination* (USAID, May 8, 2006), 11.

<sup>52</sup> James Munyaneza, "Rwanda: Women Take 64 Percent Seats in Parliament," *The New Times (Kigali)*, September 19, 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201309190110.html>. (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Gender-Based Violence Programming in Rwanda*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> United States Agency for International Development, *Gender-Based Violence Programming in Rwanda*.

<sup>55</sup> Personal interviews with members of Kigali-based NGOs, Avega-AGAHOZO and Haguruka, December 2010 and June 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.



heavily armed youth militias and genociders frequently hijacked the population within refugee camps as a bargaining tool to continue receiving food and other amenities from international aid agencies.<sup>57</sup> After a series of negotiations between the RPF, the government of then Zaire and international agencies failed to avert the crisis, the Rwandan government took matters into its own hands and invaded Zaire in 1996. The conflict between the DRC and Rwanda involved several nations. Rwanda and Uganda backed the Congolese anti-government rebel groups while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe supported Mobutu's government forces.<sup>58</sup> In 1997, President Mobutu fled Zaire and rebel leader, Laurent-Désiré Kabila became President and renamed the country The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He ruled until his mysterious assassination in 2001. His son, Joseph Kabila, then became the new president, a position he holds presently.

Although the exact toll of the war in the DRC is not known, an estimated five million lives have perished.<sup>59</sup> The war in the DRC has also given rise to one of the most complex and enduring deployment of GBV in any conflict.<sup>60</sup> Eastern Congo, the region bordering Rwanda, has become embroiled in the familiar ethnic politics of Tutsis and Hutus, with various military factions in the region articulating their grievances along those old colonial lines as a way of gaining recruits and laying claims to the vast mineral riches of the country. It has become the most volatile region with regards to sexual violence, with rebel groups, Rwandan troops as well

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<sup>56</sup> Joanne Csete, *The War within the War: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo*. (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Prunier, *Africa's World War*.

<sup>59</sup> International Rescue Committee (IRC), "IRC Study Shows Congo's Neglected Crisis Leaves 5.4 Million Dead; Peace Deal in N. Kivu, Increased Aid Critical to Reducing Death Toll," January 22, 2008, <http://www.theirc.org/news/irc-study-shows-congos0122.html> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> Csete, *The War within the War*.

as UN Peacekeeping soldiers perpetrating sexual violence.<sup>61</sup> As a 2002 Human Rights Watch study of GBV in eastern Congo reveals:

Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by most of the forces involved in this conflict. Combatants of the RCD, Rwandan soldiers, as well as combatants of the forces opposed to them—Mai-Mai, armed groups of Rwandan Hutu, and Burundian rebels of the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, FDD) and Front for National Liberation (Front pour la libération nationale, FNL)—all frequently and sometimes systematically raped women and girls...<sup>62</sup>

Although this project does not directly focus GBV in the context of the DRC, the region foregrounds questions of coloniality and GBV in Rwanda both in terms of its historical role during colonial rule (a subject I address in Chapter 2) and its contemporary implications for declaring Rwanda as a pioneer of women’s rights and anti-GBV work (I address in this in Chapter 4). Thus, it is a story that is considered along side Rwanda’s relationship to GBV.

## 1.5 Literature Review

### *Sexual Violence and Conflict: The Patriarchy Framework*

The field of feminist legal jurisprudence has been most robust in theorizing the causes of GBV in various conflicts. Feminist legal scholars note that prior to the 1990s, sexual violence was never prosecuted in any international war crimes tribunals. While many of the rules of war clearly list numerous regulations that address male civilians and soldiers, including what they eat, their visitation rights to their right to physical activity, few mentioned the women’s protection as combatants or civilians.<sup>63</sup> For instance, Rhonda Copelon’s investigation of the treatment of rape

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<sup>61</sup> “UN ‘Peacekeeping’ Troops Face Scandals on Sex Crimes, Corruption,” accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.thenewamerican.com/world-news/africa/item/16746-un-peacekeeping-troops-face-scandals-on-sex-crimes-corruption>. (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Csete, *The War within the War*, 23.

in international legal conventions reveals that although rape in wars was addressed in the Hague Convention of 1907, the Geneva Conventions, and the Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977, in these early legal treaties it was at best considered a matter of family honor, violation of personal dignity or humiliation.<sup>64</sup> Mostly, it was altogether ignored.<sup>65</sup> In the few cases when rape was acknowledged as a crime, as in the Allied Local Council Law No. 10 for Nazi criminals, no charges were brought. In the Far East Tribunal for Japanese World War II criminals, the abduction and rape of some 200,000 women and girls in so-called “comfort stations” was either ignored during the prosecution trials or discarded from official court records.<sup>66</sup> Legal scholar Kelly Askin also shows that despite the inclusion of the extensive narratives about sexual violence against women, the Nuremberg Trial transcript index headings ignored women or rape.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the twenty-two volume supplementary index of the Tokyo Trial subsumed rape under “atrocities.”<sup>68</sup>

Feminist scholars argue that since the nature of modern warfare has changed drastically after the turn of the twentieth century and the traditional language and framework for understanding concepts like war, civilian, combatant and so on are limited and obscure the ways in which many sites of violence against women.<sup>69</sup> They also note that women’s deaths are not

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<sup>63</sup> Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law: Extraordinary Advances, Enduring Obstacles.”

<sup>64</sup> Copelon, “Gender Crimes As War Crimes: Integrating Crimes Against Women into International Criminal Law.”

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>67</sup> Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law.”

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

gender neutral. Rather, the killing of women and men follow highly nuanced maneuvers of gender identities and aspirations.<sup>70</sup> They further illustrate that the types of violence observed on the frontlines of war or in militarized spaces do not occur spontaneously, but are informed by violence during peacetime. Thus, they argue that GBV in conflict zones is better understood as a “continuum of violence” from non-combat times.<sup>71</sup> Scholars view the continuum between conflict times or peacetime in a myriad of ways. Some see it as an outcome of increased militarization<sup>72</sup> while others it as an extension of the patriarchal world and regional order.<sup>73</sup> And still others maintain that it results from the climate of impunity that gender insensitive human rights and other legal instruments foster.<sup>74</sup> Despite the variations in these schools of thought, however, the belief that GBV in conflict zones primary results from patriarchy tends to dominate the literature.

Since the 1990s, the characterization global patriarchy as the root cause of sexual violence in conflicts zones has gained new theoretical sophistication, merging with the language of women’s human rights. Feminist human rights scholars have argued that the driving cause of

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<sup>69</sup> Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law;” Copelon, “Gender Crimes As War Crimes;” Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?: And Other International Dialogues* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Marguerite Waller and Jennifer Rycenga, eds., *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance* (New York: NY: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, “The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace,” in *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones*, ed. Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman (University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>72</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*.

<sup>74</sup> Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law.”

contemporary GBV is a continuum of patriarchal culture in times of peace wherein the rights of women is violated on a daily basis.<sup>75</sup> For example, Catherine MacKinnon maintains that the destruction of women in conflicts such as genocides results from not only by acts of killing, as often believed in the genocide convention. Rather, she notes that women's destruction occurs by their exclusion from the legal constitution of humanity vis-à-vis daily sex discrimination prior to conflict time. She argues:

Women are thus created as a destroyed group in part through sexual abuse. In this light, sexual abuse destroys women as such, just as genocidal rape destroys or seeks to destroy Muslims and Croats and Tutsis and Jews, defining, and in so doing in part constituting, the groups as subordinated peoples... Thus men do to women (and some men) through sexual abuse outside of genocides what some men do in genocides when they sexually abuse women (and some men, especially sexually defined groups of men such as gay men) on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, nationality, or race.<sup>76</sup>

Sexual violence then has a very similar function in everyday life and in genocide. It serves to destroy a group from the annals of humanity, thereby creating that very group as a destroyed group. As MacKinnon argues, "Pioneered and practiced on women as such with stunning effectiveness on a daily basis ... rape can just as effectively destroy peoples as such on racial, ethnic, national, and religious grounds."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, she concludes that sexual violence destroys a people in genocidal conflict because women are already destroyed by patriarchal culture that denies them rights in times of peace.

Lisa Sharlac also views the abuse of women in daily life as the basis for genocidal rapes. She argued that rape fits the Genocide Convention's definition of destroying in whole or in part a

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<sup>75</sup> MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?* Giles and Hyndman, *Sites of Violence*; Copelon, "Gender Crimes As War Crimes."

<sup>76</sup> MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?* 225.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

people—in this case women—and is therefore a crime of genocide.<sup>78</sup> As she notes, “genocide is the attempt to destroy a people, and at present women are not included under the rubric of people unless attempts are made to destroy men at the same time as women.”<sup>79</sup> She argues that feminist legal advocacy should aim to expand the definition of genocide “to include the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the female sex.”<sup>80</sup> For Sharlach, if courts acknowledge rape as genocide it will advance understandings of how GBV destroys a targeted group.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Rhonda Copelon maintains that the historical and biologizing legal designation of rape as physical and psychological harm or humiliation and degradation has meant that crimes against women are given secondary legal consideration. As Copelon notes, international legal instruments discount GBV by viewing women simply as “the vehicles of the continuity of the targeted population.”<sup>82</sup> To break away from such naturalizing discourses of gender in human rights law, Copelon calls for the legal treatment of sexual violence and rape as torture. For Copelon, the insertion of torture will circumvent the tendency to treat violence against women in all contexts as a less grave crime than sexual violence in conflicts such as genocide.

While these scholars point to the intellectual, legal and social resistance to addressing GBV, they also conceptualize gender as a primary site of women’s oppression. In doing so, they overlook the role of race, colonial histories, and neoliberalism in shaping gendered violence, particularly for non-white subjects. That sexual violence is a tool of racism or that it subjects

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<sup>78</sup> Lisa Sharlach, “Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda,” *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2000): 89–102.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>82</sup> Copelon, “Gender Crimes As War Crimes,” 228.

men in a racialized manner receives little consideration. From the emergence of early feminist literature on conflict zones, the patriarchal lens has dominated the western feminist framing of GBV. For instance, despite her meticulous analysis of rape in conflicts like genocides where racial politics are undeniable, Susan Brownmiller ultimately concluded that intersecting modes of domination are signs of patriarchy's universalism. This position is quite evident in her discussion of WWII:

Rape fit well, was conceptualized even, as a fascist act of domination. *Yet it is in the nature of any institution in which men are set apart from women and given the extra power of the gun that the accruing power may be used against all women, for a female victim of rape in war is chosen not because she is representative of the enemy, but precisely because she is a woman, and therefore an enemy.*<sup>83</sup>  
[Emphasis mine]

While her work points to the impossibility of delinking rape from contextual and historical power entanglements, her framework constructs all women into a continuum of rape and weaves all men into a continuum of global male power. She also could not account for the different uses of rape or that certain men could not cross the racial line and access certain women for rape.

Although Brownmiller's position is arguably dated, the sentiment behind her framework still dominates the contemporary discourse on sexual violence and conflict. For instance, Mackinnon writes:

What is done in genocide to destroy women of racially, ethnically, nationally, or religiously designated groups is routinely done to women everywhere everyday on the basis of their sex. All the sexual atrocities that become genocidal in genocides are inflicted on women everyday under conditions of sex inequality.<sup>84</sup>

Mackinnon who is writing about genocide is not completely inattentive to the politics of ethnicity and race since most genocides have had a racial, ethnic or religious motivation that are

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<sup>83</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 64.

<sup>84</sup> MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?* 225.

impossible to sidestep. However, her emphasis on “women” who come into groupness through acts of sexual subordination raises some questions about the universalness of the category woman. For instance, she claims that “rape, prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced and precluded abortion, violating sexual spectacles, pornography—all of these are inflicted on women not only within wars and genocides but outside them, because they are women, often because they are women of specific race, ethnicity, religion, nationality.”<sup>85</sup> While MacKinnon finds the intersections of race and class and other forms of dominion difficult to discard, she fails to see how saliently they structure the category “women.” That race, class, ethnicity, religion, nation and sexuality intersect in shaping not only heterogeneous populations but also homogenized categories like “women” is overlooked. In her framework, the ways in which race and ethnicity operate in the construction of women, indigeneity, and ethnicity that underpin violence is also illegible.

Similarly Sharlach argues that “mass rape constituted genocide regardless of whether the rapists targeted women on the basis of religious, national, or ethnic affiliation.”<sup>86</sup> For Sharlach, international law, which is dominated by men, already gives more importance to violations on the basis of ethnic and religious grounds. While, she is partly correct that contemporary law values the death of men or defines crimes in ways that privileges masculinist constructs like the nation-state, she does not comment on the racial hierarchy within international law. It is not just men who dominate international law—it is wealthy western men. Her view also says little about how western instruments like international law only subject mostly the crimes in the global south for scrutiny, obscure the west’s role the very crimes it comes to prosecute, or mask the sexual

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>86</sup> Sharlach, “Rape as Genocide,” 93.



crimes against people of color within western borders. In fact, Sharlac suggests that the global south is pathological when she writes, “before women’s emancipation in Western societies, judges perceived rape not as a crime against the woman or girl herself, but rather against the man, whether the father or husband, to whom she belonged” but that now “[w]omen are no longer chattel in most Western polities.”<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the recognition of rape as genocide by international law will help to advance women’s liberation in those non-western regions, bringing her logic full circle with that of the imperial politics like those of the Bush administration, for instance, which invoked a similar civilizational discourse to invade Afghanistan.

Rhonda Copelon also universalizes patriarchy and women’s oppression when she argues that gendered violence in conflict zones stems from a pre-genocidal “culture of male entitlement to use women as property.”<sup>88</sup> She shares a theoretical lens with Brownmiller who similarly advanced arguments about rape in African conflict zones using the women as property paradigm. Writing of rape in the Congo during the era of independence, Brownmiller argued, “Rape in Congo was shrouded in the cloak of vengeance and made plausible by an historic view of woman as the property of man.”<sup>89</sup> Through a lens of “women as property,” whole histories of race, colonialism, and slavery, become subsumed into a narrative of universal male patriarchy. The entire Congo had been Belgium’s property, a fact that was inconsequential for Brownmiller’s patriarchal model. Copelon also argues that women are “most often victims of non-state as opposed to state violence in civil society as well as war.”<sup>90</sup> By casting women’s violations within

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>88</sup> Copelon, “Gender Crimes As War Crimes,” 235.

<sup>89</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 139.

<sup>90</sup> Copelon, “Gender Crimes As War Crimes,” 235.

the realm of the private-public dichotomy and by locating the private space as the major site of violence, she renders invisible the ways in which the lives of women of color and of the global south are intricately inscribed in state violence and the private realm.<sup>91</sup>

Even theories that confront the intersections of race, class, and colonialism in conflict times reinforce reductionist views that essentialize women's experiences. Cynthia Cockburn argues, for instance:

[G]ender analysis generates demands for change, for the satisfaction of women's needs. But which women, and what needs? Women differ from each other on many dimensions. But this does not invalidate a gender analysis. After all, there are some rich people in poor countries, and not all the inhabitants of rich countries are rich. But we do not allow these facts to invalidate our perceptions that some countries are poor while others are rich and that the relations that bind them are exploitative. In the same vein, there is no reason why the perception of differences between and among women, and between and among men, should invalidate our perception of gender hierarchy and gender oppression.

Her rather flippant analogy of poor and rich countries has tremendous implications for what conflict gets attention from the West and what is neglected and devolves into genocides, as was the case in Rwanda, for instance. Theorists of sexual violence and conflict zones thus struggle to formulate nuanced interpretations of the divisions between women and the implications of these divisions.

### *Gender-Based Violence Beyond Women: Theories of Gendercide*

The narrow and binary application of GBV conflicts has not gone unchallenged. A prolific critique comes from gendercide theorists, who define gendercide as gender-selective mass-

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<sup>91</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Robin L. Riley, *Feminism and War* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2008); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005); Anannya Bhattacharjee and Jael Silliman, *Policing the National Body: Race, Gender and Criminalization in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002); Dorothy E Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1997).

killing.<sup>92</sup> They contend that the dominant feminist literature focus on women's experiences in war is too narrow and consequently downplays the ways that mass violence targets and violates men. They argue non-combatant and "battle age" boys and men are almost always the ones conscripted, arrested, disappeared or flat out killed at the outset of mass violence.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Øystein G. Holter argues that gendercide "is caused by a combination of power and masculinity process"<sup>94</sup> and that gender analysis must account for masculinities and men. Adam Jones views feminist scholarship's failure to frame the violation of men as the result its epistemological commitment to start with inquiry of violence with women's lives. Jones argues that this feminist orientation amounts to "a new logocentrism, whereby (elite) male actions and (hegemonic) masculinity are drawn into a narrative mainly as independent variable explaining 'gender oppression.'"<sup>95</sup> Therefore, one of the most obvious and intense gendered forms of violence—the targeting of men and boys—is overlooked in monitoring and intervention efforts.

While gendercide scholars draw attention to the role of masculinities in conflict and the power differentials among men, their theory is also problematic on several fronts. For instance,

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<sup>92</sup> Adam Jones, ed., "Gendercide and Genocide," in *Gendercide and Genocide* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 1–38; "A Theory of Gendercide," in *Gendercide and Genocide* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 62–97.

<sup>93</sup> Holter, "A Theory of Gendercide." Other gendercide theorists such as Gangoli also supports this argument noting "that violence against men in conflict and war if often invisibilized." (Gangoli, G. 2006. "Engendering Genocide: Gender, Conflict, and Violence." *Women's Studies International Forum*. vol. 29: 534-538.) E. G. Linder goes even further, not only agreeing that male oppression in patriarchy is masked but that the "a man speaking about the ways in which some men suffer violence within patriarchies can easily be construed by women as 'the shrewd attempt of a male to weep about victimization in order to hide his factual domination'" (Lindner, E. G. 2002. "Gendercide and Humiliation in Honor and Human Rights Societies." *Journal of Genocide Research* 4(1): 137-155)

<sup>94</sup> Mohanty, Pratt, and Riley, *Feminism and War*; Smith, *Conques*; Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*; Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*; Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1984).

<sup>95</sup> Jones, *Gender Inclusive*, 256.

gendercide theory tends to view gender and race as distinct and independent variables, where one could be present in the absence of the other. For instance, Holter, who acknowledges intersectionality when he writes, “the link between gender and power is itself closely connected to other forms of stratification, mainly class and ‘race,’”<sup>96</sup> goes on to argue “that gender is often subordinated (or sublimated) as a minor matter in ideology. Although racism reorganizes gender, as happened in Germany in the 1930s, there are also gender conflicts and developments that may *precede* other and more visible parts of the conflict buildup.”<sup>97</sup> The assumption that gender and race operate independently and function according to a hierarchy of importance is clear.

Furthermore, gendercide theorists ascribe to a belief in hierarchy of suffering. Jones’ contention that economic crisis as a gendered precursor to genocidal politics is a telling example:

One of the most predictable features of pre- or proto-genocidal situation is the advent of deepening of economic crisis. This always has profoundly “gendered” attributes. Women, for example, are likely to be “first-fired” when widespread layoffs hit, and maybe increasingly forced into the informal economy or the sex industry. Single mothers and widows may confront enormous added difficulties in securing sustenance for themselves and their children. The reality, however, is that *women rarely figure directly* in the organization of genocide, and somewhat less rarely in its perpetration [emphasis mine].<sup>98</sup>

The superlative approach—“boys are killed first” and “women are rarely directly involved”— is premised on the idea that the pinnacle of GBV victimhood is death. But such assertions conflict with the ubiquitous testimony of women survivors of GBV who point out that a frequent reason why they were not killed was because they were assumed to be “as good as dead” or because they leaving them alive was a form of prolonged punishment as ethnic women.<sup>99</sup> Indeed the

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<sup>96</sup> “A Theory of Gendercide,” 91.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>98</sup> Jones, *Gender Inclusiveo*, 260.

punishment of women through rape in war is undertaken for maximum effect because, as Cynthia Enloe points out, a woman raped in war has to consider not just her family, friends, neighbors, the rapists, and the legal options, but also “her relationships to collective memory, collective notions of national destiny, and the very institutions of organized violence.”<sup>100</sup> With a rigid attachment to the chronology of events and hierarchical view of violence, genocide frameworks underemphasize how the mechanism of death interacts with complex historical memories. They also miss how the hypervisibility as well as the invisibility of women symbiotically underpin the construction of the missing/hypervisible male, a point long demonstrated by feminist scholars.

Furthermore, genocide theorists often criticized feminist theories of violence against women in conflict zones for beginning their inquiries with women’s lives. While this critique is partly justified, it also reduces feminism into a singular discourse. For instance, it ignores the postcolonial and women of color feminisms that have long engaged the intersection of race, nation and gender. Genocide theorists also do not ask why feminist methodologies might begin with women’s lives and overlook the point that the visibility of GBV as a crime has come mainly from the political advocacy of women survivors. In other words, the politicization of gender-based violence and the decentering of largely masculinist framing of genocides was a result of feminist standpoint and collective struggle.<sup>101</sup> Genocide theorists also fail to address the

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<sup>99</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Shattered Lives*; Askin also notes how even the Rwandan Tribunal recognized in its judgment against Akayesu “that rape was frequently a prelude to death, but at times, the women were left alive because rape was considered worse than death.”

Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law: Extraordinary Advances, Enduring Obstacles,” 16.

<sup>100</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 110.

implicit assumption of man as the universal marker of humanity embedded in human rights discourses they claim to ignore men.<sup>102</sup>

## 1.6 Theoretical Framework

In order to consider the multiple crossroads at which gender-based violence in conflict zones takes shape in the global south, this study draws on postcolonial theories and transnational studies.<sup>103</sup> These bodies of work offer more nuanced interpretive models for understanding gender-based violence in conflicts, especially those of the global south. For instance, transnational feminist theories expose how militaries create and/or manipulate intersecting identities of race, gender, class and sexuality in order to frame their national security and political crisis discourses.<sup>104</sup> As Enloe notes, “racism and militarism become mutually supportive in such a national security state.”<sup>105</sup> And narratives of national security have serious implications

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<sup>101</sup> See Sandra Harding, “Is There a Feminist Method?” and Patricia Hill Collins, “Toward An Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology,” in *Feminisms*, ed. Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>102</sup> The work of Raphael Lemkin who first coined the term “genocide” after WWII is rife with the observation that a non-conventional new crime called genocide was taking place in Turkey based on precisely what Adam also points out: young, unarmed men being marched to their deaths by the Ottoman Turks. Kelly Askin’s historical analysis of a western male bias in the establishment of the Genocide Convention also demonstrates how the notions of civilian protection under armed conflict are tightly bound up with observations of experiences largely of androcentric civilian life. And her analysis of rape’s history in various international tribunals since World War II further illustrates its designation as inconsequential, with favorable attention being given to acts like torture in prisons, mass forced labor camps, forces round up and conscriptions of mostly male civilians the very group Jones argues is the primary but invisible victim of mass violence (See Samantha Power, “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide*, 2013 and Askin, “Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law.”)

<sup>103</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*; Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Duke University Press Books, 2005); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2003); Ella Habiba Shohat, *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001).

<sup>104</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*.

for GBV in conflict times. For instance, states hyper-signify third world women's fertility in security discourses "worrying not only about overall birth rate declines, but about high birth rates among those ethnic groups that the current government does not trust."<sup>106</sup> Rather than a singular narrative about militarized global patriarchy that drives rape in peacetime and war, transnational approaches to GBV and conflict zones offers a picture where complex and deliberate processes interact and shape rape agendas. Such analyses open up ways of looking at the making of ethnic identity of women in the militarized nation-state within the context of imperialism and race. And they show how the reduction of GBV to universal patriarchy obscures the care with which some women are made into legitimate state subjects while others signal national disorder and become targets of GBV in times of political crises.

Transnational feminist analysis also illuminates how the heavy reliance of dominant western feminist discourse on ahistorical male dominance in conflicts unwittingly serves as a regulating mechanism for imperial projects.<sup>107</sup> As Enloe notes the task of feminist theorizing "is to make visible women raped by men as soldiers without further militarizing those women in the process."<sup>108</sup> The practice of bringing women of the global south into feminist discourse of decontextualized hypervisibility is a problem that has long plagued western feminist practices. On some level, western feminist narratives of sexual violence operate in a fetishizing vein as those on "female genital mutilation"<sup>109</sup> and Islamic veiling,<sup>110</sup> inadvertently perpetuating "the

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<sup>105</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>107</sup> Grewal, *Transnational America*.

<sup>108</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 108.

false dichotomy of savagery versus civilization.”<sup>111</sup> Pulsating underneath such impulses is the “Western feminists’ imperial fantasies of rescuing clitoridectomized and veiled”<sup>112</sup> to which we can also add the raped women of the Global South. And the containment of dangerous dark men, usually young and radical, also becomes a central trope in imperialist and militarized surveillance of the global south.

Postcolonial feminist scholars also shed light on how gendered and sexualized colonial relationships are sustained through collective memory and the politics of representation. They show how colonial legacies are integral to the ways contemporary violence flares and how these eruptions are experienced by men and women. Lynda E. Boose’s work on the rape of Bosnian women in the former Yugoslavia illustrates how rape in war is also as an enactment of collective memory of empire.<sup>113</sup> The sexual brutalities perpetrated on Bosnian men and women strategically replayed a Serbian nationalist script that drew on Ottoman rule one hundred years prior. Memories of Turk crucifixion of Serbian men were duplicated in the war of the 1990s in reverse order, where Muslim men were subjected to similar treatment. The rape of Bosnian Muslims was often linked to the era of the “Turks,” with the raped Bosnian body serving as a proxy retaliation of Serbs against the Ottomans. Thus, sexual violence goes beyond the mere assertion of power by men over women and also becomes a means of acting out nationalist

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<sup>109</sup> Sondra Hale, “Colonial Discourse and Ethnographic Residuals: The ‘Female Circumcision’ Debate and the Politics of Knowledge,” in *Female Circumcision and the Politics of Knowledge: African Women in Imperialist Discourses*, ed. Obioma Nnaemeka (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005).

<sup>110</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* 2013.

<sup>111</sup> Shohat, *Talking Visions*, 9.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>113</sup> Lynda E. Boose, “Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement, and Serb Cultural Memory,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 1 (2002).



narratives of a people and “punishing” colonial grievances. These acts of violence reveal collective traumas, passed on through multiple political generations, internalized and projected out onto the bodies of differently conscripted men and women. Boose shows that colonial trauma is a critical experience that is able to re-emerge in future generations and ignite conflicts.

Andrea Smith’s work also demonstrates how gender-based violence is not merely a continuum of patriarchal violence understood as polarity of the sexes. She argues that rather, it is a continuum of colonial violence.<sup>114</sup> From the perspective settler colonial genocide and GBV, Smith highlights how “sexual violence is a tool by which certain people/groups become marked as inherently ‘rapable.’”<sup>115</sup> As she notes, native peoples are violated “not only through direct or sexual assault, but through a wide variety of state policies, ranging from environmental racism to sterilization abuse.”<sup>116</sup> Smith emphasizes colonial institutional practices as sites of sexualized destruction communities of men and women. As Smith notes, “If sexual violence is not simply a tool of colonialism and racism, then entire communities of color are the victims of sexual violence.”<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, as Smith also notes, “sexual violence does not affect Indian men and women in the same way. When a Native woman suffers abuse, this abuse is an attack on her identity as a woman and an attack on her as Native. The issues of colonial, race, and gender oppression cannot be separated.”<sup>118</sup> Nor can they be tossed into the dustbins of history because they continue to inform the violence experienced by Native women. Through her lens, we get a complex picture that calls for an expanded framing of genocide and gender-based violence.

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<sup>114</sup> Smith, *Conquest*.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

By shifting our feminist framework away from essentialist notions of identity toward models that can account for the regional and global politics of GBV in conflict zones, we can better understand how militarism inscribes men and women across many social political networks. We also see the plurality of gendered experiences in armed conflict, and how sexual violence in militarized zones is partly sustained by a colonial logic. And finally, we can reconsider political strategies that criminalize and regulate racial subjects and expose the danger in framing the state, often a large-scale perpetrator of GBV, as a protector. Doing so allows us to redefine and develop strategies for anti-violence work that do not naturalize empire or privilege the nation-state.<sup>119</sup>

### **1.7 Colonialism, Nationalism, Militarism and Patriarchy: New Feminist Frameworks for Analyzing the Gendered Violence and the Rwandan Genocide**

While western feminists generally tend to view patriarchy as the primary cause of GBV during times of conflict, some have attempted to address the colonial dimension in conflicts such as the Rwandan genocide.<sup>120</sup> They have shown how human rights based, single-axis frameworks surrounding GBV in Rwanda fail to capture the critical role colonialism played in the sexual politics of the country. For instance, Jennie Burnet's work on Rwanda complicates conventional views of GBV in human rights law. Noting how western understandings of consent has driven much of the western feminist assumption about rape in conflicts zones, Burnet shows that "Rwandan cultural models of sexuality and consent complicate investigations of sexual violence as a crime or human rights violation."<sup>121</sup> While feminist human rights literature ties rape to the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>120</sup> Burnet, "Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990–2001)"; Erin K Baines, "Body Politics and the Rwandan Crisis," *Third World Quarterly*, 2003; Enloe, "When Feminists Think About Rwanda."

<sup>121</sup> Burnet, "Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990–2001)," 106.

idea of consent—sex that takes place without the consent of women is rape and that women raped in war cannot be consent to sex—Burnet argues that the political economic context within which the sexual violence in the Rwandan genocide took place challenges this view. For instance, during the genocide were similar and many women may have made calculated choices to be “wives” to soldiers, perhaps even initiating the arrangement, as a way of survival. While such acts cannot be considered consensual they challenge the understanding of non-consent in much of the GBV and conflict zones literature and bring to light the complexity of local and cultural contexts in framing GBV in conflict zones.<sup>122</sup> Burnet also addresses how the advent of colonialism significantly altered pre-colonial customary marriage practices, weakening older kinship systems that may have protected women through lineage associations. The shift in the economic systems marriage and kinship wrought by colonialism introduced new forms of patriarchal control by pushing men into the economically more lucrative cash economy and eroding women’s former, albeit limited, economic and social rights in Rwanda.<sup>123</sup> Hence, the cultural context in which violence against women is sustained in everyday life and in war calls into question the tendency of human rights-based discourses to reduce sexual violence in conflict to a single meta-theory of patriarchy.

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<sup>122</sup> Burnet notes that the very idea of “consent” and “rape” in pre-genocide Rwandan society did not exist in the Kinyarwanda language. Women’s sexual agency and sexual consent were inscribed with historically specific and contingent political economy. For instance, in customary marriages, which predate the colonial times in Rwanda, the concept of women’s rapability did not exist in marriage, since wives’ sexual access in marriage was a naturalized expectation. Furthermore, in such customary marriages, Rwandan women’s sexual agency was negotiated within a complex economy of bridewealth, land inheritance, and labor transactions in marriage. The political economy of sexuality in Rwanda, then, does not adhere neatly to the politics of non-consent and consent that has developed in the west and tends to dominate the international human rights discourses of GBV in war.

<sup>123</sup> Burnet, “Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990–2001),” 101.

Drawing on insights from feminist analysis of gender and nationalism, Erin Baines also engages the question of sexual violence and coloniality in the Rwandan genocide, arguing that Rwanda's genocide as well as the GBV in it was not only an effort to cleanse the land of the Tutsi but also an attempt to "actively engender a vision of 'Hutu nation' in the minds of an otherwise diverse and fragmented local populace."<sup>124</sup> As a politics of nation building, the Rwandan genocide was a part of the state's body politics that simultaneously sexed and ethnicized the populace. Nation building was complicit with colonial constructs of race and gender, drawing on symbols and rituals that aligned Hutu nationhood within a colonial semantics of race and relied on sexual control of women's bodies. Nationalist rhetoric recalled colonial narratives positioned Tutsi women as attractive prizes, haughty aristocrats in need humbling and emasculators of the Hutu nation. And because nation building relied on body politics, Tutsi women's fertility figured in central ways in the state's project.

While Burnet and Baines pay attention to the intersections of local and colonial patriarchy in the making of rape in war, their understanding of colonialism leaves some elements of colonial domination under explored. For instance, Burnet frames colonialism largely as a matter of political economy, neglecting its racial and cultural dimensions. While she notes the role the ideology of Tutsi women's beauty played in their rape, she does not capture how the colonial politics of infused entire white civilization theories vis-à-vis the Hamitic Hypothesis. And this theory traversed economic, cultural, political and scientific projects. Beyond how colonialism increased Rwandan women's vulnerability to violence by restructuring the local mode of production, she does not address the critical role colonialism played in racializing local sexual relations and gender systems. For instance, Belgian rule aggressively highlighted some aspects of Rwandan patriarchal practices such as polygamy as oppressive to women and singled

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<sup>124</sup> Baines, "Body Politics and the Rwandan Crisis," 479.

them out for reform while they left intact practices such as domestic violence and rape, practices that were reflected in their own attitudes about sexuality and marriage.<sup>125</sup> Thus, that the practice of “consent and non-consent” in Rwanda is not entirely a matter of political economy because cultural modes in Rwanda were prime targets of the colonial rule.

While paying careful attention to the interplay between colonialism, nationalism and patriarchy in the making of GBV during the genocide, Bains also confines her focus on colonialism largely to the ways in which Rwandans internalized colonial ideology. But how colonial rule operated both at the psychic and the institutional level receives little attention. For instance, how individual internalization of colonialism by colonial subjects itself was reinforced, shaped by, and negotiated alongside institutions such as the law, the military, education and the family receives little attention.

In her brief but careful analysis of the Rwandan genocide, Cynthia Enloe highlights several critical and interconnected ways in which the politics of racialized ethnicity and gender politics intersected in laying the groundwork for the genocide and the subsequent deployment of rape in it.<sup>126</sup> For example government policies aimed to generate certain naturalized and nationalized concepts of masculinity and femininity that would correlate further with origin stories of both the Hutu and Tutsi populations. The state militarized masculinities through in myriad of ways including through the army and the youth militias. As the oldest pillar of the military, the army naturalized masculinized hierarchies and relied on the wide network of both men and women. The youth militias, which played a crucial role in the genocide, were largely unemployed men who were easier to exploit by giving them a sense of proximity to state

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<sup>125</sup> Bryant P. Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique: The Military in the Belgian Congo, 1914-1939* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1984).

<sup>126</sup> Enloe, “When Feminists Think About Rwanda.”

power.<sup>127</sup> Although the youth wings have been viewed as a rampant killing and raping machines, Enloe cautions that such views only help to naturalize the regular army by giving it the veneer of discipline and order.<sup>128</sup> As she notes, the youth militias were under the guidance of seasoned army personnel and politicians and rather than a group of aspiring patriarchs gone wild, these militias were the product of intersection politics of age, race, class and gender. Enloe highlights how the gender politics racial cleansing was further fueled by weaponry, implicating the often invisible but crucial role that the global arms suppliers play in local conflicts.<sup>129</sup> In Rwanda, an interlinked chain of countries that included France, Egypt, Israel and apartheid South Africa were all major players in the provision of weaponry to Rwanda. Enloe further demonstrates how the genocide was also sustained by the regime's reliance on old colonial narratives as way to forge a strategy of ethnic polarization. The state masterfully revived certain historical grievances, focusing on the role the Tutsi played in the colonial hierarchy. At the same time, it downplayed the fact that a series of policies in education, the military and the public sector that seriously disabled Tutsi minority rule post-independence.

Although much of the focus on conflict zones and gender hones in on the link between militarism and masculinity, Enloe argues that ignoring the way women are central in the politics of militarism is “to sustain the dangerous idea that Rwanda women don't have to navigate between complex identity choices”<sup>130</sup> and to “cement the image of Rwandan women as ‘natural’ victims,’ as ‘natural’ refugees.”<sup>131</sup> For Enloe, denaturalizing gendered victimhood demands

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 26.

historicizing the past and rendering visible the invisible actors in conflicts. And a historicized approach must consider not only what happened in the past but also how a regime portrays the sequence of historical events. While she points out the institutional ramifications of colonialism, she does not present the colonial genealogy as a rigid and defining event that occurred without renegotiation by political actors. Rather, she shows how colonialism in Rwanda was a contingent event that provided the ideological groundwork for contemporary actors to frame and reframe it within their own self-interests, their ideological attachments to the nation state, their predicament in region geopolitics and their location in the global world order. Her work allows for a genealogical analysis of GBV in Rwanda without absolving the perpetrators of their crimes, reifying colonialism and naturalizing women as perpetual victims.

### **1.8 Research Questions**

In order to understand the colonial genealogy underpinning GBV during the Rwandan genocide, I ask the following questions:

1. How did the colonial era in Rwanda tie Tutsi women's sexuality to discourses of indigeneity?
2. How did population explosion and refugee crisis discourses of post-independence Rwanda reenact colonial tropes of indigeneity and how did the consolidation of these discourses signify Tutsi women's bodies as sites of danger to indigeneity and national sovereignty?
3. How do leaders in Rwanda's robust anti-GBV movement understand the colonial legacy of GBV in the 1994 genocide and do their views differ from the dominant feminist view of GBV and conflict zones?

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

## 1.9 Research Methods

Because this project is concerned with the interplay between colonial and post-colonial in the making of a politics of GBV in conflict zones, the guiding methodology is feminist genealogy. As Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty note, genealogy is “an interested, conscious thinking and rethinking of history and historicity, a rethinking which has women’s autonomy and self-determination at its core.”<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, genealogy is a “comparative, relational and historically based conception of feminism, one that differs markedly from the liberal-pluralist understanding of feminism...”<sup>133</sup>

To examine the colonial and post-colonial periods, I use interdisciplinary methods including discourse analysis of colonial documents; textual analysis of the post-independence discourses of overpopulation and Tutsis refugees; and intellectual ethnography with contemporary Rwandan activists working on issues of GBV in Rwanda. Because each chapter employs specific methods, I will discuss my methods for each chapter.

### *Chapter Two*

Postcolonial and transnational feminist scholarships have highlighted the relevance of representational politics in accounting for hidden genealogies of contemporary politics of gender and race. Colonial discourse analysis is “a critical reading strategy” that makes the link between historical representation and the politics of empire. As Lata Mani notes, it highlights the ways in which “conceptions of history, community, identity, labor, and sexuality emerged under colonial domination, how colonial policy was shaped by them, and the shifts they represented from pre-

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<sup>132</sup> M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies and Movements,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), xvi.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.



colonial forms.”<sup>134</sup> This technique permits a consideration of a range of missionary texts “against one another, identifying how, over time, they intersect, diverge, or articulate with each other.”<sup>135</sup> In the context of GBV, discourse analysis opens up theoretical spaces that move beyond patriarchy. In her work on the framing of rape in literature set in colonial India, Jenny Sharpe illustrates that “‘what it means to be rapable’ is framed by racial tensions that cannot be understood as simply another form of patriarchal violence.”<sup>136</sup> Similarly, Amina Mama points to the historicity of violence against African women by “tracing the genealogy of the conditions that foster violence against women.”<sup>137</sup> Mama navigates the scant colonial data on violence against women, reading against the grain of this fragmented representation to reveal how colonialism engendered gendered violence in Africa, which is felt even to this day.

Despite its wide use in interdisciplinary fields concerned with colonial and imperial historicity, discourse analysis is not without complications. For instance there is a danger of presenting colonialism as “the determining marker of history.”<sup>138</sup> Postcolonial studies have also been seen to over-privilege of textuality and representation at the expense of the material and institutional aspects of colonial power and of neglecting class and other forms of power and

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<sup>134</sup> Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>136</sup> Jenny Sharpe, “The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 224.

<sup>137</sup> Mama, “Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa,” 47.

<sup>138</sup> Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term, ‘Post-Colonialism,’” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 293.

hierarchy among colonized peoples.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, its engagement with archival recuperation also raises thorny questions about agency of the represented since it is often not clear whether hegemony can be conflated with dominance.<sup>140</sup>

These concerns certainly haunt this dissertation as well. For instance, the appearance of Tutsi women in the colonial writings is highly fragmented and sparse. Like many other colonized women's appearance in colonial texts, they are hardly "speaking" subjects or often "speak" via hearsay, appearing mainly in exchanges among colonialists. Working from such fragmented archival data runs the risk of obscuring the agency of the women represented and risks representing African women as perpetual victims.<sup>141</sup> In the case of this project, there certainly remains the danger of rendering Tutsi women as one-dimensional and passive. Therefore, attempts to engage this archival material as "data" is not immune from complicity with colonizing methodological traditions of depicting an overly victimized subjecthood.

The challenges posed by discourse analysis as a method are certainly not resolved in this project. Nonetheless, the method is still a productive methodological tool. For one thing, the traditional disciplinary definitions of "data" that emphasize causality are ill-suited to engage questions about gendered violence in the colonial era precisely because women appear in colonial archives mostly in fragmented and dismembered ways. Writing on the historicity of gender relations in Africa, therefore, requires reading against the grain and weaving together vast amounts of disparate texts. And while it does not offer definitive evidence for the colonial continuities of contemporary GBV, discourse analysis still provides important signposts that

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<sup>139</sup> Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998); Mani, *Contentious Traditions*.

<sup>141</sup> Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, 3.

permit the development of broader conceptual frameworks in assessing contemporary conflicts in Africa.

### *Primary Source Selection*

The primary sources for this chapter include colonial materials such as administrative edicts, personal correspondences, missionary reports and memoirs as well as travel journals. Consulted works include colonial writings on the German East African territory and on Belgium's African territories. Discussions of Ruanda-Urundi and its inhabitants often took place within larger conversations about the Belgian Congo, the most lucrative and attractive Belgian territory to many visitors and colonial agents writing on the region. Therefore, the selected texts are often primarily written on the Congo. The selected texts are not limited to Belgian colonial actors. Although the most crucial colonial encounter for Rwanda history was Belgian rule, the racial characterization and chronology of the region took place within the general colonial experience of the region, including German, English and French rule. Despite the differences between colonial powers, there still existed a great deal of cooperation between these powers, relying on a network of cooperation as well as competition. The works of non-Belgians invested in the Belgian colony as explorers, scientists, ethnographers and visitors were also treated here important archival sources about the connection between domination and representation. For this reason, colonial writings by Belgian officials were analyzed alongside travel writings on the region by Belgian as well as non-Belgian European researchers, adventures as well as missionaries. The selected colonial writings, which range in genre, are treated here as a coherent data source based on their intertextual relationship.<sup>142</sup>

Through a compilation of these colonial writings, I examine the construction of Tutsi women within the debates on land, indigeneity and civilization that animated the state. I do not

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<sup>142</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Vintage, 1979).

treat these seemingly different genres of writing as smoking gun, cause-and-effect evidence of GBV against Tutsi women. Rather, I look to them for hints about how the ideology and iconographies that animated the mass violation of Tutsi women in the 1994 genocide were configured and codified in the political landscape of the region long before 1994. I read these texts not only as sites of epistemic violence but also as sources for the ideological premise of Tutsi women's rape in 1994. A list of primary source for this chapter is found in Appendix A.

### *Chapter 3*

In order to assess how the convergence of overpopulation and refugee crisis discourses in post-independence Rwandan politics signified Tutsi women as threats to national security and indigeneity, I employ Foucauldian approaches of genealogical analysis of discursive fields.<sup>143</sup> I analyze the gendered and racial narratives of overpopulation and refugees in key organizations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Refugee Watch. I also examine government discourses as they appear in the testimonies gathered by Human Rights Watch in *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*.<sup>144</sup> Gathered immediately after the genocide, this text remains the definitive primary source of the genocidal government's propaganda. It also offers English and French translations of original text and oral material from the Rwandan language, Kinyarwanda. When important figures in *Leave None to Tell the Story* faced trials at the International Criminal Court for Rwanda (ICTR), I also examined their trial transcripts. Additionally, I analyzed public

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<sup>143</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977--1978* (*Lectures at the College de France*), 1 edition (Picador, 2009); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990); Stephen Legg, "Foucault's Population Geographies: Classifications, Biopolitics and Governmental Spaces," *Space Place Population*, 11, no. 3 (2005): 137–56; Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>144</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

records of The Arusha Accords, the set of negotiation brokered by the Organization for African Unity to end the conflict between the Rwandan government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). These negotiations are another source of government discourses. A list of consulted texts for this chapter is provided in Appendix B.

#### *Chapter 4*

In chapter four, I use intellectual ethnography to I examine how African feminist accounts of GBV speak to its colonial genealogy. Intellectual ethnography is a praxis-based decolonizing ethnographic approach that centers activists as knowledge producers who have a great deal to “tell us about the world we live in and how to change it.”<sup>145</sup> The goal of situating the inquiry of GBV causes in conflicts within the standpoint of African anti violence activists is not to center their missing voices or highlight their organizational behavior. Rather, the aim is to explore GBV from a place where it has been explored in-depth and where the theorizing is actively instituted into public policy, advocacy and social consciousness agendas. In Rwanda, questions of theory and practice are hardly separate realms.

#### *Research Design and Informant Selection*

During a preliminary research in Kigali, Rwanda in 2008, I used the snowball method to identify key players in Rwanda’s anti-gender-based violence movement, especially those with knowledge of GBV during the genocide. My inquiries led me to Avega-AGAHOZO and Haguruka headquartered in capital, Kigali, two crucial sites of African feminist knowledge production. Avega-AGAHOZO was established in 1995 by a group of fifty widows and now represents over 20,000 members throughout the country.<sup>146</sup> From the outset, GBV was a central focus of Avega’s political agenda—almost all the members had been raped during the genocide.

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<sup>145</sup>Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*. xxiv.

<sup>146</sup> Avega’s history is based on accounts of Avega’s director and founding members.

Haguruka is the largest legal aid NGO in Rwanda dedicated to the advancement of the rights of women and children.<sup>147</sup> Established in 1991, it soon disbanded due to internal division over the genocide but reconstituted after the genocide. In addition to legal advocacy and training, Haguruka also conducts research and publishes on numerous legal issues facing Rwandan women and children. As an organization with continuity in the pre- and post-genocide era and as a leading women's rights research organization, Haguruka is distinctly positioned to understand the shifting terrains of GBV in peacetime and in conflict.

Between December 2010 and June 2011, I returned to Kigali and conducted, confidential semi-structured interviews with a total of twenty-two informants. Twenty-one informants recruits were from Avega and Haguruka and they included feminist identified or outspoken supporters of women's rights. Informants included men and women informants who specialized on GBV-related issues, ranging in their capacity from executive directors, board members, and NGO-founders, to lawyers, social worker, psychologists and scholars.<sup>148</sup> Upon the urging of my informants, I also included one independent scholar and conflict resolution trainer working in Rwanda as well as countries in the region. His emphasis on historical factors and indigenous healing and reconciliation models as a way to address GBV qualified him for this study.

## **1.10 Overview of Chapters**

**Chapter 1:** This introductory chapter presented an overview of the dissertation project, reviewed the key bodies of literature on gender based violence and conflict zones, detailed the research questions and explained the theoretical and methodological frameworks I employ.

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<sup>147</sup>Organizational profile of Haguruka is based on interviews with the organization's director.

<sup>148</sup> The names of all the informants have been fictionalized.

**Chapter 2:** In this chapter, I explore the colonial iconographies of Tutsi women by grounding them within larger colonial representational and institutional practices of violence throughout Africa. I then show how Belgian rule remade local ethnic and social groups along sexualized racial lines. I show how the Hamitic Hypothesis was a sexual theory of civilization and hybridity that inserted Tutsi femininity at the heart of discourses of indigeneity. I argue that Hamiticized representations of Tutsi women as alluring and degenerate racial hybrids set them up as fearsome and sexualized figures who, unless subdued, could spell demise for the native population.

**Chapter 3:** In this chapter, I trace the interplay between the colonial and postcolonial eras by analyzing discourses on population explosion and Tutsi refugees in post-independence Rwanda. I examine how the convergence of these discourses reenacted colonial racialism and precariously positioned Tutsi women in Rwanda's political crisis. By juxtaposing population and refugee discourses I show how the making of overpopulation discourses in Rwanda date to the colonial era and how they were a means of naturalizing the Hamitic Hypothesis and the meaning of indigeneity within it. I argue that the post-colonial state discourse targeted Tutsi refugees as destabilizers of an indigenous Hutu population, making colonial population discourses the predecessor of refugee discourses in the country. And I illuminate how within narratives that portrayed Tutsi refugees as threats to an indigenous land, Tutsi women's sexuality and fertility figured in critical ways. Thus, I highlight the colonial genealogy of ethnic sexual politics.

**Chapter 4:** In this chapter, I center the knowledge production of Rwandan activists on GBV in conflict zones in order to examine how they theorize the causes of GBV in the 1994 genocide. Based on ethnographic research with twenty-two of Rwanda's most authoritative anti-GBV feminist and women's rights activists based in Kigali, I show how non-western activists pay attention to colonial politics and rapability in contemporary politics. However, I also discuss the

theoretical overlaps the Rwandan activists share with western feminists in terms of their articulation of GBV in conflict zones as women's human rights. I then discuss the difficulty their views pose to genealogical approaches to GBV.

**Chapter 5:** In this concluding chapter, I summarize the key findings and arguments advanced by this project and tie together the theoretical strands of the various chapters. I also reflect on the theoretical and political significance as well as limitation of framing GBV in conflict zones genealogically.



## CHAPTER 2

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND COLONIAL COMPLICITY IN BELGIAN RULE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

#### 2.1 Introduction

During the Rwandan genocide, an estimated quarter million women and girls were raped and subjected to various forms of gender-based violence (GBV). The violence was of such shocking scale that it even stunned Romeo Dallaire, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), who recalled:

I don't know when I began to clearly see the evidence of another crime besides murder among the bodies in the ditches and the mass graves. I know that for long time I sealed away from my mind all the signs of this crime, instructing myself not to recognize what was there in front of me.... For long time I completely wiped the death masks of raped and sexually mutilated girls and women as if what had been done to them was the last thing that would send me over the edge.<sup>149</sup>

GBV was so systemic that even a general, who had witnessed the killing fields since the beginning of the genocide could not fully absorb the magnitude until two months later. But when an estimated two million Rwandan Hutus, including genocide perpetrators, crossed into what is now Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in June 1994, Rwanda's reputation as the most shocking site of GBV was eclipsed by its neighbor. Rwanda's travelling genocide had crossed the border and set off an epic war in the DRC that engulfed several African nations. But "Africa's World War," as the DRC conflict came to be known, soon become just as notorious for

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<sup>149</sup> Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

its “War within the War,”<sup>150</sup> the sexual warfare primarily against women and girls that raged on for over a decade and continued even after the war officially ended in 2003.<sup>151</sup> And with each passing year, this “war within the war” was intensifying. In 2004 alone, Amnesty International reported 40,000 cases of rape.<sup>152</sup> In 2008, an estimated ten years after the onset of the war, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimated that there were at least 1,000 rapes per month and declared that rape was being used as a weapon of war in the DRC conflict.<sup>153</sup>

The Rwandan genocide perpetrators remained key players in the systemic deployment of sexual violence in the DRC. They used it to prevent women who wanted to return to Rwanda and effectively end the massive humanitarian aid provided to this “refugee” community by the international agencies.<sup>154</sup> But rape in the DRC involved many more actors than the Rwandan Hutu extremists: Hutu-aligned Congolese rebels groups, the Congolese Army, Tutsi-dominated Congolese rebel groups and their Rwandan allies, as well as UN peacekeeping forces were all implicated in rapes and other forms of GBV.<sup>155</sup>

The most notorious location was eastern Congo, especially the area around Lake Kivu bordering Rwanda and Burundi. In 2011, the United Nation’s special representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, declared the DRC,

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<sup>150</sup> Csete, *The War within the War*, 11.

<sup>151</sup> UNICEF, “As DR Congo Crisis Persists, UN Classifies Rape as Weapon of War,” *UNICEF*, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo\\_44598.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/drcongo_44598.html). (accessed March 26, 2014).

<sup>152</sup> Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of Congo Mass Rape: Time for Remedies*. (London, UK: Amnesty International, 2004), 13.

<sup>153</sup> UNICEF, “As DR Congo Crisis Persists, UN Classifies Rape as Weapon of War.”

<sup>154</sup> Csete, *The War within the War*.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*; “UN ‘Peacekeeping’ Troops Face Scandals on Sex Crimes, Corruption.”

particularly the eastern Congo, as “the Rape Capital of the World.”<sup>156</sup> In an op-ed for the *Huffington Post*, feminist playwright, Eve Ensler, also wrote, “What is happening in Congo is the most brutal and rampant violence toward women in the world.”<sup>157</sup> Like General Dallaire for whom the shock of the Rwandan rapes far exceeded any crime he had witnessed during the genocide, Ensler who had for years worked on violence against women through her internationally celebrated play, *The Vagina Monologues*, and been involved with survivors of GBV in places like Bosnia, similarly declared:

Nothing I have heard or seen compares with what is going on in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where corporate greed, fueled by capitalist consumption, and the rape of women have merged into a single nightmare. Femicide, the systematic and planned destruction of the female population, is being used as a tactic of war to clear villages, pillage mines and destroy the fabric of Congolese society.<sup>158</sup>

The contemporary round of outrage regarding sexual violence in the DRC was sparked by the events of the post-1996 conflict, but it was not the first time rape in the central African region had incited strong feminist condemnation. On the eve of Congo’s independence in 1960, the rape of white nuns in the country by the notorious Congolese Army, the *Force Publique* (the Force) had shocked the world and precipitated feminist thinking on sexual violence and political conflict. The feminist rape research pioneer, Susan Brownmiller, brought this event into the western public consciousness in the 1970s in her groundbreaking book, *Against Our Will*. In it she argued that the violence against the nuns “was not a plot of the CIA or Belgian mining

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<sup>156</sup> “DR Congo Is World ‘Rape Capital,’” *BBC*, April 28, 2010, sec. Africa, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8650112.stm>. (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Eve Ensler, “War on Women in Congo,” *The Huffington Post*, accessed March 21, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eve-ensler/war-on-women-in-congo\\_b\\_204949.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eve-ensler/war-on-women-in-congo_b_204949.html). (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

interests”<sup>159</sup> but that “The Congolese... were doing no more, in violent, compacted fashion, what the colonialists had been doing to black women for a century, and that they themselves had been doing throughout history to the women of their own race.”<sup>160</sup> She argued that these acts by the Force, to which she referred as “rogue elephants,” were “a gesture of revenge for humiliations suffered in the past.”<sup>161</sup>

The involvement of so many armed men in the rape of women all over the region gave the impression that rape in times of conflict is the universal game of patriarchy and its victim is universal woman. But the declarations of the DRC as the worst place to be a woman and the shock surrounding GBV in the Rwandan genocide obscure the long history of colonial sexual violence in the region and underplay the making of rape within a colonial backdrop. As Amina Mama argues, understanding any form of violence against African women need to be genealogically grounded because colonialism “was both a violent and a gendered process, which exploited preexisting social divisions within African culture.”<sup>162</sup> While, as Mama cautions, women were not uniformly affected and that some were active beneficiaries of the colonial changes, colonialism did introduce new forms of violence on a large scale across the continent.<sup>163</sup> This process may not have been consistent or fully successful but it nevertheless had a perceptible impact on African women’s lives and remains critical to the evolution of gender-based violence in Africa.

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<sup>159</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 132.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Mama, “Sheroes and Villains,” 48.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Andrea Smith notes that despite the fact that sexual violence was a tool of colonial conquest, it is often the sexual violence of perpetrated by men of color that often garners exclusive scrutiny, leaving the European “absent when the violence occurs” and highlighting the savagery of the racial other.<sup>164</sup> And Rwanda and the DRC, whose political fates are intertwined, were both Belgian colonies. Belgium’s long history of gendered violence in its territories, however, has not received much feminist scrutiny. For instance, while Brownmiller hinted at the importance of a genealogical survey of rape in Congo when she noted that the “The Congolese... were doing no more, in violent, compacted fashion, what the colonialists had been doing to black women for a century,”<sup>165</sup> she abandoned further inquiry into the historical violation of black women in pre-colonial or colonial times. Nor was she curious about the reasons why the Force was exacting revenge or where the army learned its tactics. And in her linguistic slippage, the Force and “the Congolese” often appeared as interchangeable. While Brownmiller signified the race of the white nuns, she rejected racial critiques that extended beyond those that underscored the rape of white nuns, writing that “a higher political understanding is gained by recognizing that sexual intimidation knows no racial distinctions, and that the sexual oppression of white women and black *women is commonly shared* [emphasis mine].”<sup>166</sup> The historical violation of black women then served as a way to stage the narrative of the rape of white nuns.

In this chapter, I disentangle the making of rape by centering the colonial era as a precursor to the grammar of rape that continues to inform the central African region’s politics. I examine the use of sexual violence as a tool of colonial rule in the entire continent and analyze its prevalence and features in the Belgian Congo. I center Belgian rule as the site of the “absent

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<sup>164</sup> Smith, *Conquest*, 22.

<sup>165</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 131.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

referent” of sexual violence in both Rwanda and the Congo, treating it a microcosm of colonial rule throughout Africa, not its exception. I discuss the Belgian invention of the Force and importance of systemic GBV for the Army. Finally, I analyze the specific relationship between colonialism, the politics of indigeneity and women’s bodies by tracing Tutsi women’s representation in colonial literature. I pay particular attention to the sexual politics behind the Hamitic Hypothesis and its significance to the entire colonial enterprise in Africa. I argue that the discursive and institutional representation of Hamitic women rested on a static association of eroticism and degeneracy of the hybrid Hamitic woman, an association underlying the mass rape of Tutsi women in 1994.

## **2.2 Hardheaded Disentanglements: The Link between Conquest and Rape**

The eruption of sexual violence in the central African region has animated current debate about a seemingly new trend of rape in conflict. However, a historical engagement of the region reveals complex colonial discourses and practices of sexual access and violation of African women. Long before Wallström declared it the eastern Congo the “rape capital of the world,” the region was been on the minds of colonial explorers such as Italian scientist and explorer Attilio Gatti. On a cold and foggy November evening in 1933, Gatti was sitting in contemplation of his upcoming trip to the Ituri forest in eastern Congo in order to track down the elusive Okapi, the legendary half Zebra and half Giraffe believed to reside there only. He wrote of the Ituri:

From behind the most impregnable defense of her wall of gloomily silent darkness and crazily tangled vegetation, the forest knows how to hold her own secrets against time and man. Only during the last half-century, under the hardheaded persistency of the white man, how she unwillingly yielded a few of the secrets, grumblingly revealed some of the inhabitants of her domain.<sup>167</sup>

He recalled that on that day, as he “dreamily” traced his pencil along his map to the white

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<sup>167</sup> Attilio Gatti, *Great Mother Forest* (New York, NY: C Scribner’s sons, 1937), 24.

margins of the page marking the beginning of the uncharted Ituri, that he scribbled, “‘Our BaseCamp,’ with a very hopeful, but quite doubtful, question mark.”<sup>168</sup> But his “energetic” punctuations, he remembered, “broke the white virginity of the map.”<sup>169</sup>

Postcolonial feminist theorists have long highlighted the link between colonial metaphors and sexual violence in colonial rule.<sup>170</sup> As Anne McClintock notes, colonial tropes such as maps “assembled in miniature three of the governing themes of Western imperialism: the transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women; the emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the Imperial command of commodity capital.”<sup>171</sup> While colonial iconographies that reduce mysterious forests and native women to metaphors and allegories of their sexual violation have been widely explored,<sup>172</sup> Gatti’s particular narrative highlights the link between African women’s bodies, conquest, and sexual violence in a region that has come to global visibility for GBV in the contemporary era. Hence, Gatti’s common trope is an important site for tracing hidden histories of sexual violence in central African power politics.

While it captures how colonial representations interwove the politics of land, indigeneity and sexual violence, Gatti’s narrative of disentanglement was more than a metaphoric rendering of sexual violation, however. The articulation of land and women in an atavistic continuum is a microcosm of the colonial approach throughout the African continent, including the Belgian territories. Throughout Belgian rule, the violence against women was in fact a central part of the

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Jenny Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

<sup>171</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 1.

<sup>172</sup> Smith, *Conquest*; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Sharpe, *Allegories of Empire*.

day-to-day lives of colonial officers and colonial institutional function.

### 2.3 Colonial Love Stories: A Colonial Rite of Passage

Dupin said that, believe it or not, for his first year and four months he didn't touch a woman. The idea of black ones filled with disgust. ... The authorities at the mines kept insisting that he take a woman—it's their very sensible policy for keeping all their men satisfied with Africa—but he was stubborn.

"You didn't like Africa then?" Den asked.

"I hated it. ... And all this time, mind you, there was a woman in the house. For three months she was there, put there by my boss, and I would not look at her. I couldn't. One night I drank too much whiskey, and when I went to bed, there was a woman there...."

"Then in truth," said Den, "it was you who were seduced."

"Exactly."

"And how did you feel afterward? Completely reconciled?"

"No, I was disgusted. But after that it was not so bad."

"And now you like Africa?" said Den.

"Ah, I would not think of going back. I have prolonged my term the second time, now; Europe means nothing...."<sup>173</sup>

This story recounts the experience of Belgian road construction expert Mr. Dupin, who left Belgium for the Congo in the early 1920s. Recently widowed and leaving behind his daughter in Belgium, He arrived in Africa bad mental shape. But the emotional toil of his transition was soon eased by the arrival of his mixed race Congolese lover, "the little one," who set him on a course of romantic recovery. When American journalist, Emily Hahn and Belgian Territorial Administer, Mr. Den passed by his town, they stayed with Den who recounted his struggles and romantic triumph in Africa. Hahn reported his story in her 1933 memoir about her adventures in the Congo.

While Daupin's account above does not make it entirely clear under what the circumstances "the little one" showed up in his life, the business of "putting women there" was in fact an active policy implemented by the Belgian mining companies as well as many other colonial institutions. In fact, one of the biggest practitioners of this policy was the Belgian

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<sup>173</sup> Emily Hahn, *Congo Solo: Misadventures Two Degrees North* (Montreal, Canada; Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1933).



colonial army, the Force, Brownmiller's "Rogue Elephants."<sup>174</sup> Established in 1885 by King Leopold of Belgium, the Force was the army of the Congo Free State and later the Belgian Congo<sup>175</sup> and served as both army and police force well into independence.<sup>176</sup> Initially, it was comprised of Belgian officers but they were African soldiers working for other colonial armies soon began replacing the white soldiers until the high cost of importing foreign soldiers subsequently led to the recruitment of Congolese natives to fill the ranks.<sup>177</sup> Although the Force became a native army, recruits were rotated between far away regions in order to minimize ethnic rebellions. Thus, soldiers usually ruled over people with whom they had little cultural, linguistic or regional affinity and could be especially aggressive toward the communities under their jurisdiction.<sup>178</sup>

During its early years, the Force's mission was to maintain internal Belgian hegemony but after the breakout of the Second World War, it increasingly took on the role of a regular army, concerned with defending the colonial territory from colonial rivals.<sup>179</sup> The Force was distinct from other colonial armies in that it was mostly under the command of civilian territorial administrators and private mining companies.<sup>180</sup> It thus resembled a "series of small

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<sup>174</sup> Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 136.

<sup>175</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>180</sup> The only exceptions were the mining companies at the very mineral rich region, Katanga, in the southern part of Congo. The main company there, Compagnie du Katanga, ran its own police form known as the Comite Special du Katanga (CSK) out of fear of conquest by the British and French. Nevertheless,

disconnected military bands...[whose] operational links ran directly from the posts and companies to the closest civilian administrator.”<sup>181</sup> The result was a wide-scale abuse of the Force for a variety of colonial ventures, both personal and imperial. The soldiers were instrumental in collecting the lucrative rubber and village taxes as well as in carrying out reprisals against rebellious villages, enlarging their booty.<sup>182</sup> The colonial territorial administrators were especially incentivized to accumulate private wealth through the army. They often earned big commissions from private companies for subduing native insurrections.<sup>183</sup>

Throughout the colonial era, recruiting and retaining soldiers was one of Belgium’s most challenging tasks.<sup>184</sup> The army relied mainly on forced recruitments, a practice considered by historians as “perhaps the most hated memory of colonial times.”<sup>185</sup> These forced recruitments led to frequent rebellion, with villagers often burning down their villages and fleeing into nearby forests.<sup>186</sup> Thus, the Force often pursued the most vulnerable members of society, including boys as young as ten years old, a standard practice that continued well into the 1930s.<sup>187</sup> During the army’s early years children presumably rescued from slave traders and entrusted into King Leopold’s care were funneled into the army.<sup>188</sup> Recruitment also took place among non-

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even commanders of the Katanga troops were initially associated with the Force, where they first gained their experience in military administration. See Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 19 and 21.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 22–23.

<sup>184</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>185</sup> Jan Vansina, “Mwasi’s Trials,” *Daedalus*, III, 2 (spring 1982), p. 630

<sup>186</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 216.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

compliant natives as a form of punishment, especially for surreptitious activity against the state.

As a recruiting officer for the Force recalled:

The District Commissioner receives an order to furnish a certain number of troops. He goes to the chief and invites them to a palaver at his residence. Usually the chiefs suspect right away what is going to be discussed, and they have learned by experience that “injury teaches wisdom.” They put on a good face to a bad game, and come. Each chief promises to furnish a certain number of slaves and gets a few presents to furnish a certain number of slaves and gets a few presents in return. But sometimes one or another chief won’t respond to this friendly invitation, and then it’s war without mercy...His villages are threatened, or a few men are shot and his harvest is taken away. Thus are the black kings led to respect the whites. Following this, peace is made on condition that these chiefs furnish a double number of slaves.<sup>189</sup>

The pressure on the local chiefs led them to give away their most vulnerable population such as the sick, elderly, and the orphaned, which did little to bolster army membership or strengthen its effectiveness. The shuffling of soldiers across the vast and harsh territory also led to starvation, fatigue and disease that often wiped out a large percentage of recruits.<sup>190</sup> The Belgians also worried about ethnic composition of the Force, which put them in a bind. While they desperately needed strong men versed in the art of war, the warrior tribes were prone to rebellion and hence made risky recruits. Also the constant relocation of the soldiers across the large Congolese terrain decreased the soldiers’ chances of making culturally appropriate ethnic marriage and kinship partnerships and repelled many men from joining the army.

The Belgians introduced a series of measures to stem the loss of soldiers. By the 1940s, the army proposed new policies to evaluate the physical fitness of recruits.<sup>191</sup> It also instituted a

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>189</sup> Officer Boshart’s account in French was published in French in “La Mutinerie dans l’Expedition Dhanis,” *Patriote*, 2 February 1898. English translation in Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 215.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 220.

lottery system to relieve the pressure on chiefs. This new system introduced new class stratified masculinities with “evolved natives” or “those whose normal standard of living is superior to that of the soldiers” such employees of European companies, teachers, native authorities in the colonial offices, students clergy from military service exempted from military recruitment.<sup>192</sup> The concept of the evolved native also took root within the structure of the Force itself. In the 1940s and 1950s, the army began recruiting educated recruits, considering them more capable than rural soldiers in managing more complex tasks such as wireless operation and clerical administration. This new class of military men received training them in accounting, arithmetic, French, reading, and writing, and religion.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, these elite men also posed a challenge. As one Belgian officer put it, they were “inbred with a spirit of superiority” and prone to disobedience.<sup>194</sup>

Although the Belgians deployed various strategies to boost army recruitment, they continued to struggle with retention. Soldiers continued to defect, rebel, and as was often the case, die. And as Force historian Bryant Shaw notes, “high mortality and morbidity among all workers were of great concern on both humanitarian and economic grounds. The labor force was not reproducing itself, and this threatened the economic development of the colony.”<sup>195</sup> But one of the favorite strategies they employed to stem declining membership was the use of Congolese women.<sup>196</sup> In fact, utilizing women was one of the army’s early and enduring policies.

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 207–208.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 234.

<sup>194</sup> Original quote in French was published in *Force Publique, Rapport Annuel* (FPRA) 1948, Part II, Confidential, 13. English translation in Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>195</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 269.

Like Daupin's mining company, the Force, too, actively encouraged "putting women there." As early as 1895, the Force was promoting marriage and officially declaring that it was "absolutely essential for draftees to be married and under no pretext should these unions, which must be contracted under strictly legal forms, be dissolved just because the spouses might receive different destinations" and instructing that recruits be accompanied by their families.<sup>197</sup> In addition to encouraging "the family spirit" and "the edifying and civilizing influence of monogamy,"<sup>198</sup> marriage was said to be a way to minimize the soldiers' discontent about being drafted to faraway places with no suitable marriage options, one of the Force's most hated practices.<sup>199</sup> In addition to their reproductive and sexual roles, women helped solve another one of the Force's headaches—food production.<sup>200</sup>

Colonial administrators even facilitated offered dowry payments on behalf of soldiers.<sup>201</sup> Although the native population was not keen on this practice at first, by 1914, state sponsored dowry had become official policy. Territorial administrators were instructed to double their advertisement and facilitation of dowry payments."<sup>202</sup> The village chiefs were then used to make

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Original French text published in "Circulaire Rappelant les Instructions Relatives au Traitement des Milicents," 9 March 1895, *Receuil Mensuel* 1895, 19. English translation in Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 269.

<sup>198</sup> Original French text found in "Circulaire Presecrivant la Construction dans les Garisons, camps et Campagnes d'Instruction, d'Habitations Absolument Distinct pour les Soldats Mariés," 21 November 1895, *RM* 1895, 75; "Circulaire Relative aux Allocation Accordeés au Personel Feminin," 1 November 1899, *RM* 1899, 235; "Circualre Concernant le Personnel Feminin Attache au Camps et Station," 5 October 1901, *RM* 1901, 173. English translation in Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*, 275.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 278.

the idea of dowry payments palatable to villagers.

Once recruits, came on board, they were trained to enforce all manners of colonial policy, clear forests and build roads. They were also taught to punish villagers who resisted colonial labor and tax policies. They frequently burned entire villages and abducted women and children.<sup>203</sup> The women, who often became camp followers, made ideal wives and concubines who can then reproduce the next generation of soldiers. Captured male children were also turned into soldiers. Thus, Congolese women's fertility was at a premium for the colonial enterprise. As Shaw notes, "the state's desire for married recruits meant that many women were, like their male counterparts, simply dragooned into the [Force] during recruitment operations."<sup>204</sup> By the 1930s, women were given extensive medical care, particularly pre-natal and post-natal care as well as screening for sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>205</sup> While the practice took root, women disliked and fiercely resisted both these policies and interventions. They were often forced to attend health seminars and programs by military officers.<sup>206</sup> By the early 1950s, an estimated forty percent of the Force was married and by the mid-1950s, the percentage of women who were either wives or camp followers was close to fifty-seven percent.<sup>207</sup>

From the outset, then, the Force was one of the most aggressive institutions in which the culture of GBV was systematically cultivated. It was also the army that ruled over both Wallstrom's "rape capital of the world," the Kivu region bordering Rwanda and the DRC as well

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 272.

as Gatti's Ituri in eastern Congo. The Force was also the official army in Belgium's neighboring territories of Ruanda-Urundi, one of the most difficult places for Belgian authorities to subdue.<sup>208</sup>

This army continued well into independence when it was integrated into of Zaire's official army.

## **2.4 The Great Epics of Africa: Colonialism and Sexual Discipline**

The colonial practice of availing women begs the question "what was life like for Congolese women?" Emily Hahn's account of the story of an Englishman she met offers a glimpse. Hahn met the Englishman while he was working for a mining company. At the time of their meeting, he was in such distress over a recent upheaval in his love life that he poured his heart out to Hahn, a perfect stranger at the time:

"Need apron-strings to hold onto for the moment," he said. "White apron-strings. Mind?"

"Of course not. I'm always glad to help. But what the devil does that matter?"

He hesitated, then just grinned and waved his hand.

"One of the great epics of Africa," he said. "Heartbreakin' drama, you know, only no matter. Let's get another drink."

I liked him.<sup>209</sup>

He began recounting his embroilment in a love triangle with his Congolese "wives," two sisters named Pantolo and Satuma.

First, you ought to know what happened, and then I'll tell you how I felt. First thing of all, of course you know what drives me so crazy is the way she lied. I've often told her that I understand sometimes a person isn't satisfied with one person. I myself am not satisfied with only her. Why, I've been thinking of taking a Bandaka girl, myself. I've told her that if ever she wanted a vacation, to tell me and I'll send her home or somewhere till she felt like coming back. I wouldn't like it, but—I wanted to know. ...<sup>210</sup>

Upon his return from a business trip, Pantolo had mentioned that he had been neglecting his

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<sup>208</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>209</sup> Hahn, *Congo Solo*.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

other wife, Satuma. To make amends, he decided to spend the night at Satuma's shack. It was on that night that what he called one of the "great epics of Africa" unfolded. While he and Satuma were sleeping, a colony of ants invaded the shack, forcing the couple to flee to his town house. But there, he discovered that Pantolo had taken a native lover, Kongolo. Rattled by the sudden arrival of the Englishman, Kongolo then jumped out of a window and fled. The man then turned his attention to Pantolo:

"I said to her, "Who was the man with you?" And she wouldn't say. She refused to admit that there had been a man with her. I took her by the throat, and she said, 'Kongolo.' Why do you suppose she told me the truth right away? Frightened, I guess. I meant business. I made her get up and walk with me because I wanted to have her alone. She wouldn't tell me a thing. I strangled her over and over again—she has marks on her throat—and at last she said that it was the first time he had ever happened in that they hadn't even made love; Kongolo was only sleeping there. I just hope of making her coming anything but a life that night, so I brought her back and tied her to a tree."<sup>211</sup>

Awakened to the possibility of other lovers in the women's lives, he then began questioning Satuma who also confessed to having a local lover. Throughout the night, he then struggled with his emotions. As he told Hahn, "I wanted to be perfectly calm and reasonable, and that night I was," he said, having only threatened Yusufu and Kongolo with beatings and shootings. "Perfectly reasonable, you see," he appealed to Hahn, who expressed her agreement. Indeed, as Gatti noted, it had taken "the hardheaded persistency of the white man" to make the African female "yield a few of her secrets."

Although he had declared that he was through with both women, the next day, he decided to speak to Pantolo about reconciliation. Her options were to marry Kongolo or return to her village. When she declined both propositions, he then gave her one final option:

I said, 'Or you can come back to me. But you must take 12 strokes of the fimbu, and shave your hair, and sleep in another bed till I call you back, and for six months I will buy you no more clothes, and we will rub out the blood-packed we once made—because it seems to do

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.



no good; you lie anyway—and you must take a bath and throw water into the river, and I will burn this bed.’<sup>212</sup>

Pantolo accepted this last option and he kept his promise of twelve lashes, hair shaving and the rest of his conditions for forgiveness. He also gave strokes to the men, removed from the payroll of their companies and threw them out of the town, threatening to kill them if they returned. But when the men turned up the next day to collect their belongings, a loyal servant alerted him. The Englishman demanded that the native chief arrest them, which the chief obliged. But the chief denied the request for complete custody of the men to the Englishman on the grounds that the latter had made threats to murder them. The chief’s defiance did not go over well: “at noon I boiled over again. I meant business. I took my gun and went to the jail and called the chief, and he still said no, so I came back and called eight of my own men.” He had Yusuf and Kongolo beaten some more and demanded that the Chief escort them to the river to ensure their banishment. But when the Chief refused, the Englishman broke into the chief’s house, pointed a gun at him and gave him a slap that damaged his ears.<sup>213</sup>

Even though he and Pantolo reconciled, things were never the same again: “I took her out of the bush and brought her to town, and she met all the town girls and listen to them.” But the town was not the ultimate cause of Pantolo corruption. The real culprit was more familiar and sinister: the inscrutable native woman. “I shall never understand her,” he sighed, “Nor Pantolo, nor any of them.”<sup>214</sup> Like Gatti’s forest, black female sexuality was a source of threat that can only be contain through brute force.

When read together, these fragmented colonial stories of violence and sexual access point

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 216–217.

<sup>214</sup> Hahn, *Congo Solo*.

to an invisible and yet central genealogy of the systemic violation of African women. As the narratives of Gatti, Dupin, and the Englishman illustrate, colonial policies were predicated on gender-based violence that often positioned native women in unsafe situations. Women's bodies were sites of pleasure and threat, capable of transporting colonial rulers to spiritual restoration as well as inciting them into fits of rage. In colonial settings, native women were "put there" either by force that included abductions and forced. And their transgressions were met with gendered violence. Women were stripped naked, choked, tied, and defeminized with impunity. In colonial towns, there was no legal redress for colonial gender-based violence against native women. As a surprised Hahn remembered, Pantolo's abuser "got off with a sizable fine" and his punishment was only for slapping a native chief.<sup>215</sup>

## **2.5 Movement, Fertility and Indigeneity in Colonial Rule: The Reification of Identity and the Codification of Gendered Violation**

As I discussed in Chapter 1, western feminist analysis of sexual violence in Africa often addresses racial and ethnic politics in the making of GBV in a superficial manner, viewing them as secondary to universal patriarchal oppression.<sup>216</sup> That ethnicity is deeply critical to colonial rule and that its configurations enabled sexual violence have not garnered much attention. But a close interrogation of the politics of ethnic formation in Africa after the advent of colonialism reveals a highly gendered project that embedded GBV in the making of racial hierarchies. Particularly important were colonial discourses indigeneity that underpinned indirect rule.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> For examples of such articulations, see Askin, "Prosecuting Wartime Rape and Other Gender-Related Crimes Under International Law.;" Cockburn, "The Continuum of Violence;" Copelon, "Gender Crimes As War Crimes;" MacKinnon, *Are Women Human?* and Sharlach, "Rape as Genocide."

<sup>217</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

During late, sexual erotica and violence became intricately configured in forming “ethnic” authenticity. In a 1929 Rhodes Lectures outlining the contours of indirect rule and its relationship to the native question, colonial commander of South Africa, General Jan C. Smuts described what he perceived to be emerging governance issues in colonial Africa. According to Smuts, the increasing native migration into urban areas was undermining racial segregation posed urgent governance problems.<sup>218</sup> As Mamdani notes, “the more the economy developed, the more it came to depend on the ‘urbanized or detribalized natives.’ As that happened, the beneficiaries of rule appeared an alien minority and its victims evidently an indigenous majority.”<sup>219</sup> Smuts proposed what would become the hallmark of colonial rule—a “politically enforced system of ethnic pluralism (institutional segregation), so that everyone, victims no less than beneficiaries, may appear as minorities.”<sup>220</sup> Driven by the common assumption that “the native family home is not with the white man but in his own area,”<sup>221</sup> and that the retention of the native lands was for the protection of native welfare, Smuts proposed to fill the expanding needs for native labor while retaining racial segregation by designating some land as the native’s indigenous homeland. That way, migrant native workers could be shuttled into town for work and returned there when the need for their labor ebbed.

This strategy involved, however, the intense redefinition, and in some cases, plain invention of “nativity,” “tribe” and “ethnicity.” And it rested on a highly gendered logic. As Smuts argued:

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

It is only when segregation breaks down, when the whole family migrates from the tribal home and out of the tribal jurisdiction to the white man's farm or the white man's town, that the tribal bond is snapped, and the traditional system falls into decay. And it is this migration of the native family, of the females and children, to the farms and the towns, which should be prevented. As soon as this migration is permitted the process commences which ends in the urbanized detribalized native and the disappearance of the native organization. It is not white employment of native males that works the mischief, but the abandonment of the native tribal home by women and children.<sup>222</sup>

For Smuts, African women's bodies, movement, sexuality and their reproduction—not colonial rule—were the causes of “native” breakdown. By recasting African women into narratives of native traditions and tribal orders, the control of their mobility and sexuality was at the forefront of economic and institutional agenda. And in the colonial imagination, their regimentation was natural and justice, because, as British parliamentarian, George Hardy, proclaimed, “The man remains a man as long as he remains under the watchful gaze of a woman of his race.”<sup>223</sup>

The stability of Smuts' notion of indigenous territory rested on the fixing of native women within a dehistoricized “anachronistic space.”<sup>224</sup> Intertwined with virgin lands, stripped of sexual agency, identified as the enemy of progress and presented as a threatening nature, Native women symbolized “anachronistic humans”<sup>225</sup> who had to be conquered or eliminated. The logic of indigenous settlement pointed to a sinister preoccupation with notions of racial degeneracy that the unrestrained movement, sexuality and fertility of native women could

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<sup>222</sup> J.C. Smuts, *Africa and Some World Problems, Including the Rhodes Memorial Lectures Delivered in Michaelmas Term, 1929* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1929), 76–78.

<sup>223</sup> Quoted in Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1995), 129.

<sup>224</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 30.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

disseminate.<sup>226</sup> Colonialists exerted a great energy trying to resolve the impending moral, social and economic Armageddon posed by the movement of the fertile women and the hybridity they threatened.<sup>227</sup> The making of ethnic indigeneity in African was, thus, underwritten by the sexual violability of native women.

Smuts articulations of the colonial dilemma and his proposed solutions were not limited to South Africa. They became a standard throughout the continent. For instance, in German East Africa, which included Ruanda-Urundi, historian Mary Townsend notes that “it was stipulated that in taking possession of the ‘crown land’ near native communities, areas should be preserved for them on the basis of future growth in population, and a Land Commission was appointed by the government including a native *jambe* or *akida* to delimit those preserves.”<sup>228</sup> The era of indirect rule was also important for the Belgian colonialism where land policies such as the demarcation of native settlements and obsessive reconfigurations of indigenosity and identity coalesced around Hamiticism.<sup>229</sup>

The colonial codification of institutional segregation altered gendered discourse and introduced new gender relations in state institutions as well as in cultural practices. New racial and heterosexist patriarchal social organizations and beliefs gave rise to the cult of domesticity and masculinized labor.<sup>230</sup> As McClintock notes, the colonial project “cannot be understood

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<sup>226</sup>Young, *Colonial Desire*.

<sup>227</sup> Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

<sup>228</sup> Mary Evelyn Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire: 1884-1918* (New York, NY: Howard Fertig, 1966), 281.

<sup>229</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

without a theory of domestic space” as domesticity allowed the “mass-marketing of empire as a global system.”<sup>231</sup> The new capitalist economic systems were organized along ethnic lines that restricted income to certain favored ethnic males. The expanding need for suitable industrial labor as well as the defiance of native women to remain in native lands also propelled the activity of creating a “civilizing,” bureaucratic workforce in the colonies. For instance, the Belgians picked the “evolved” population to for clerkships and appointed mainly sons or other close relations of native chiefs for these positions. And chiefs received “an income sufficient to satisfy their material needs.”<sup>232</sup>

Colonial schooling for local elite males also burgeoned and helped break down native power.<sup>233</sup> For instance, Catholic schools in Ruanda-Urundi helped to weaken the pre-colonial chain of command that concentrated power in the central court of the Tutsi Kings that was frequently forcing the territorial administrators into the negotiation table with the court and the chiefs.<sup>234</sup> Throughout colonial rule, the daughters of the local elite were also enfolded into the modernizing project through the expansion of schools that taught the art of household care, sanitation and other domesticity related work.<sup>235</sup> And the shift toward a wage earning economy was underwritten by a Eurocentric patriarchal ideology of family that undervalued women’s

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<sup>230</sup> Mama, “Sheroes and Villains;” McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Nancy Rose Hunt, “Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa: Usumbura’s Foyer Social, 1946-1960,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15, no. 3 (1990): 447–74.

<sup>231</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 17.

<sup>232</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 63.

<sup>233</sup> Hunt, “Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa,” 447.

<sup>234</sup> Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 62.

<sup>235</sup> Hunt, “Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa;” Gertrude Mianda, Nancy Hafkin, and Edna Bay, “Colonialism, Education and Gender Relations in the Belgian Congo: The Evolué Case,” in *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), 144–63.

work and made women susceptible to widespread violence.<sup>236</sup> The static fixing of native women and the bolstering of the new masculinized black worker were necessary preconditions to the amalgamation of nation, empire and capitalism. The purification of native lands and the crafting of new gendered norms emerged through systemic coordination of epistemic violence and material surveillance by native chiefs, the police and colonial armies.

These colonial practices of segregating land, masculinizing modern institutions and reifying indigeneity continued well into the post-independence era. As Mamdani notes, while post-independence African states did not entirely ignore the colonial legacy of race, ethnicity, and tribalism, for the most part, they continued to practice “state-enforced separation, of the rural from the urban and of one ethnicity from another. But in doing so each reproduced a part of that legacy, thereby creating its own variety of despotism.”<sup>237</sup> Through a myriad of policies, the post-independence states continued the colonial practices as population control, nativist citizenship and institutional and land segregation. The violation of ethnic women in contemporary ethnic conflicts must, therefore, be situated within these colonial moments because they remind us that the eruption of genocide, war, and civil unrest in Africa is, in good measure, a colonially entrenched inheritance.

## **2.6 Erotic Entrapments: The Gendered Politics of Colonial Representation**

In her work on race, representation and contemporary sexual politics in the United States, Patricia Hill Collins tracks the genealogical link between the historical representation of black women’s sexuality, contemporary racial politics, popular culture and the censorship of black

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<sup>236</sup> Mama, “Sheroes and Villains.”

<sup>237</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 8.

female sexuality.<sup>238</sup> Confined within a series of limited discursive practices, black women's sexuality risks commoditization, surveillance, impoverishment and violation. The enclosure of "sexual alternatives" is partly enabled by the circulation of ideas of "wildness," "allure" and "danger" that date back to slave and colonial encounters.<sup>239</sup> Collins shows how the politics of representation in contemporary popular culture enacts "an ever-changing yet distinctive constellation of sexual stereotypes in which Sarah Baartman's past frames J-Lo's [Jennifer Lopez's] present."<sup>240</sup> Thus, the marketing of J-Lo's infamous behind operates within what Anne McClintock calls "'porno-tropic' colonial tradition of sexual representation," where colonized women "figured as the epitome of sexual aberration in excess" and where "folklore saw them as given to a lascivious vengery so promiscuous as to border on the bestial."<sup>241</sup> Through a politics of extremes, a thread continues to connect black women within a racialized sexual discourse. The continuum of repressive representations survives because, as Collins argues:

[S]exual spectacles travel, and they matter. Historical context disappears, leaving seemingly free-floating images in its wake that the common new vocabulary that joins quite disparate entities. Terms such as "primitive," "backward," "jungle," "wild," and "freak" uncritically cycled through contemporary global culture, leaving undisturbed the pejorative historical meanings associated with this vocabulary. But history hides in the shadows of these terms, because these concepts are incomprehensible without a social context to give them meaning.<sup>242</sup>

While Collins's assessment of black sexuality focuses on the association of black bodies with sexual excess and deviance, her insight that the foreclosure of sexual expression for black

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<sup>238</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*, (New York, Routledge, 2005).

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>241</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 22.

<sup>242</sup> Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, 42.



women and the ahistoricized “traveling” of these representations set the stage for their violability offers a conceptual map for thinking about sexualized violence against African women in ethnic wars. As a close look at the politics of sexuality and representation in colonial Rwanda reveals, black women were not only confined to notions of excessive bestiality and danger, but often also enclosed in narratives of remoteness and beguiling sensuality, which were no less violating. These entrapment in images of danger on the one hand and otherworldly allure on the other, were simultaneous grids of representation that confined sexual alternatives for African women. In the case of Tutsi women, these dual representations and entrapments operated within the discourse of the Hamitic Hypothesis.

## **2.7 Hamitic Hypothesis: An Overview**

The Hamitic Hypothesis was a general belief that all achievements in Africa were brought there by the Caucasian race.<sup>243</sup> Although its name suggests a Biblical genealogy dating to the story of Noah and his curse on his son, Ham, it was a highly contradictory and elaborate theory that integrated biblical, archeological, biological and anthropological discourses to dispute the possibility of a black civilization.<sup>244</sup> Noah’s story was particularly important for racial theorizing because it foretold the story of the origin of nations.<sup>245</sup> After commanding Noah to build a boat and to select and save his righteous family that included his wives, his sons Ham, Shem and Japhet, as well a pair of male and female of the animal species, God flooded and destroyed the earth. After the floods, God remade the earth and the “nations of the earth sprang from the children of the nameless wives of Shem, Ham and Japhet, who bore their children after they

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<sup>243</sup> Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis.”

<sup>244</sup> Eltringham, “Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country”; Mama, “Sheroes and Villains.”

<sup>245</sup> Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis.”

settled again upon the earth.”<sup>246</sup> But Ham also bore of a curse. When he found his father Noah drunk, he “saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.”<sup>247</sup> Ham’s transgression against his father led to the curse of his progeny, with Noah declaring, “Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”<sup>248</sup> Canaan, along with his brothers Cush, Mizrahim and Punt, went on to populate Egypt and the region south of the Nile River.

While this story of the scattering of Ham’s progeny long circulated in the European Christian narrative as the story of Africa’s origin or the story of black people, it was not until the rise of colonial conquest and the transatlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century that it emerged as a full-fledged racial discourse and provided a metaphoric and historical understanding the geographic distribution of racial groups.<sup>249</sup> For instance, the Hamitic narrative’s suggestion that Blackness and enslavement were divinely ordered was deployed in the defense of slavery. Ham and his descendants who presumably populated the area south of the Egyptian peninsula were cursed into servitude.<sup>250</sup> For those interested in spreading Christianity, the Hamitic Hypothesis became a cornerstone of conquest. The children of Ham could only overcome their curse through salvation in Christ.

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<sup>246</sup> Genesis 9:8–9 in *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>247</sup> The full text in Genesis 9: 23–27 states, ““Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. <sup>23</sup> And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.” *The Bible*.

<sup>248</sup> *The Bible*, 9:25.

<sup>249</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>250</sup> Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis;” Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*; Eltringham, ““Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country.””

Although theologians were the first to saturate slavery and colonialism with the idea of a Hamitic scattering of people, the emerging community of scientists quickly followed suit, adapting the theory to explain the evolution and hierarchy of the races.<sup>251</sup> With scientific empiricism posited that race was the driving force of history, the physicality of race was at the forefront of cultural theory and helped to consolidate emerging epistemologies. As Robert Young notes, racial science was a multidisciplinary endeavor where “comparative anatomy, and the more specialized craniometry, was almost always combined with some degree of comparative psychology, most evident in phrenology ... [which], in turn, invoked history, aesthetics and questions of culture and civilization. ...”<sup>252</sup> And the Hamitic Hypothesis provided the conceptual foundation for reconciling disparate scientific fields and resolving one of the most thorny questions that challenged the idea of a racial hierarchy and social evolution—that of a black civilization, particularly Egyptian civilization.

Napoleon centered Egypt in colonial discourse and shifted the Hamitic Hypothesis from its old clerical domain to the heart of scientific discourse.<sup>253</sup> When in 1798 he occupied Egypt, his accompanying archeologists and scientist helped create the new science of Egyptology and invent a new version of the Hamitic myth.<sup>254</sup> Enfolding Egypt into a white European genealogy of civilization was no easy task, however. Archaeological excavations of mummies revealed a

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<sup>251</sup> Eltringham, “Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country”; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis.”

<sup>252</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, 123.

<sup>253</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Eltringham, “Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country”; Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis.”

<sup>254</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis;” Philip S. Zachernuk, “Of Origins and Colonial Order: Southern Nigerian Historians and the ‘Hamitic Hypothesis’ C. 1870-1970,” *The Journal of African History* 35, no. 3 (January 1, 1994): 427–55.

population of extensive racial mixture threatening to unravel the theory that Egypt was built by early white rulers.<sup>255</sup> It became imperative to draw on theories of language, migration as well as the work of ancient writers, which, considered together, expanded the sources of evidence for a white civilizing influence in Africa.<sup>256</sup> Colonial scientists posited that even though Egyptians included blacks, these were no ordinary blacks but highly civilized ones whose accomplishments were inherited from their ancient, non-negroid ancestors who settled Egypt long ago. As a theory of racial migration, the Hamitic Hypothesis confirmed Egypt as “nominally as part of Africa, as part of it geographically but not organically, considered African but not Negroid, both Egyptians and Ethiopians could be presented as external civilizers of ‘Negro Africa.’”<sup>257</sup>

Egypt’s mixed population also forced a rethinking of the theological accounts of Hamitic descent. In the old version of the Hamitic Hypothesis, Ham’s descendants were cursed and black, but if Ham’s descendants were black, then Egypt could not be easily recuperated as an old white civilization. Thus, the theory was adjusted to reflect that while Canaan was cursed, the rest of Ham’s sons were not. And because Mizrahim, not Canaan, was Egypt’s ancestor, the Egyptians were “black but not Negroid, and thus not cursed.”<sup>258</sup> But even though they were “blacks in white skin,” the Egyptian Hamites were at the lower spectrum of the racial tree of man. Anglo-Saxons reigned at the top<sup>259</sup> while the Egyptians, who held the bottom position below the Slaves, occupied the “summit of the African pyramid.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Sanders, “The Hamitic Hypothesis;” Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

<sup>256</sup> Zachernuk, “Of Origins and Colonial Order.”

<sup>257</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 83.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 84.

By the early twentieth century, the Hamitic signifier involved theories of language, geography, occupation and science, allowing a wide range of Africans to be included in it.<sup>261</sup> The Berbers of North Africa as well as the black Ethiopians, Tutsis, Massais, Somalis and Hima of east and central Africa and the Fulani and Yoruba of West Africa among many others, were all conceptualized as Hamitic relatives.<sup>262</sup> The Libyans were said to be closer to “pure blood” white descendents of the original Hamitic people. But the Tutsi, the Massai and others were considered a part of the lineage via linguistic theories. They were said to be Hamites who “lost their original language” through intermixing with negroid racial types of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>263</sup> Thus, while some groups were pure breeds, others like the Tutsis were seen as hybrid Hamites.<sup>264</sup>

## **2.8 The Tutsi as Hamite**

By the time the influential explorer, John Hanning Speke, arrived in Rwanda during his pursuit of the origin of the Nile in the late nineteenth century, the Hamitic Hypothesis was in full effect. When Speke encountered the Tutsi kingdom, he referred to the Tutsi people as the “Hamitic Galla from Ethiopia.”<sup>265</sup> When the Belgians took over Ruanda-Urundi, the Hamitic Hypothesis was enthusiastically embraced and disseminated by the Catholic missions.<sup>266</sup> And by the early twentieth century, this “hypothesis” had turned into a common sense, historical, scientific and theological fact, with all types of European visitors speaking with great authority on the topic.

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Zachernuk, “Of Origins and Colonial Order.”

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 85.

<sup>266</sup> Eltringham, “Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country.”

All aspects of Tutsi physicality, from their facial feature, height, and dress styles, served as scientific evidence of Hamitic lineage and this depiction dominated colonial views for decades:

- 1926: Musinga's (the King's) head was set on a well-moulded neck; face, a long oval with a straight Egyptian type of nose...<sup>267</sup>
- 1936: Judging by their tall, slim build, one would realize at once that they have been predestined to be rulers. ...The fine, noble profile of the Batutsi is long and narrow. They differ considerably from the Negroes in appearance. The only thing they have in common with the latter is their hair which, although in the form of rather longer curls, may certainly be called wooly.  
In stature as well as in facial expression they remind one of the Abyssinians and similar peoples of north Africa, who are reckoned to be descendants of the sons of Ham.<sup>268</sup>
- 1954: Their costume too—the white toga with traditional designs and the veil—the stylization of the color schemes with which they decorate their furniture or weave their magnificent raffia girdles, even their language, are clearly Egyptian in origin...<sup>269</sup>

While these opinions about African races were ubiquitous throughout the continent, they were especially potent in Belgian controlled Ruanda-Urundi. The period from 1927 to 1936 would prove decisive in shifting the Hamitic Hypothesis into an organizing principle behind institutional and administrative units such as taxes, education and religion.<sup>270</sup> In the 1930s, the Belgians carried out an extensive census and issued ethnic identity cards that designated the Tutsis to the top of the region's ethnic pole.<sup>271</sup> Just like Egypt occupied the lower rung of

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<sup>267</sup> Thomas Alexander Barns, *An African Eldorado: The Belgian Congo* (London, UK: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1926), 48.

<sup>268</sup> Paul Schebesta, *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts* (UK: Hutchinson and Co, 1936), 198–199.

<sup>269</sup> Felice Bellotti, *Fabulous Congo* (London, UK: A. Dakers, 1954), 35–36.

<sup>270</sup> Eltringham, “Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country”; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>271</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi* (Population Studies, 1953).

whiteness but sat at the top of the African pyramid, the Tutsi also occupied the highest position of the local racial order while subordinated to white colonials. They were elevated to a mediating status in the theoretical crisis of race, civilization, and human history.

Although Hamiticism was far from a constant signifier in Rwandan politics and took on new iterations and intensities during different periods,<sup>272</sup> the classification of the population based on this theory shaped Rwandan political culture in fundamental. At every political crisis since independence, the Hamitic Hypothesis was reworked to settle questions of indigeneity and citizenship to varying degrees.<sup>273</sup> But by the 1990s, Hamiticism took center stage in the articulation of the country's political crisis and became a ubiquitous rallying cry at the highest levels of government. In an infamous speech a few months before the Rwandan genocide, Leon Mugesera, the former vice-President of the ruling party proclaimed, "The fatal mistake we made in 1959 as to let them [the Tutsi] get out. They belong in Ethiopia and we going to find them a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo River."<sup>274</sup>

## **2.9 The Blackening of Ham and The Sexuality of Hamiticism: The Black Mother as Site of Degeneracy**

Although the racializing function of the Hamitic Hypothesis has been widely explored both in the Rwandan and Africa contexts,<sup>275</sup> its sexual politics has not garnered much attention. But it remains an important genealogy that helped to mark Tutsi women as rapable. The Hamitic

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<sup>272</sup> Eltringham, "Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country."

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 172.

<sup>275</sup> Eltringham, "Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country"; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Michael Spöttel, "German Ethnology and Antisemitism: The Hamitic Hypothesis," *Dialectical Anthropology* 23, no. 2 (July 1998): 131–50; Zachernuk, "Of Origins and Colonial Order;" Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis."

Hypothesis was premised not only on the notion of a black curse but specifically on the curse of the Black female. In fact, the blackening of Ham depended on the black mother who was the transmitter of a curse in the biblical sense, and a carrier of degeneracy in racial scientific discourse.

As noted earlier, while some accounts of Hamitic Hypothesis placed the curse of Noah on Ham himself, the Biblical account posed a problem to the theory of Ham's blackness. Ham may have been the one to commit the crime of "seeing his father's nakedness" but Noah cursed Ham's son, Canaan, the forefather of the Egyptians. Although in Biblical accounts Ham's transgression was not literally spelled out beyond the act of seeing his father's nakedness, most ecclesiastic debates surrounding Ham's sin interpreted it as a sin of sex.<sup>276</sup> In some Biblical interpretations, Ham was believed to have sodomized his father<sup>277</sup> but this theory was not useful for the logic of the Hamitic Hypothesis because it could not explain why Canaan and not Ham came to bear a curse. According to the most popular explanation, Ham had castrated his father by sleeping with Noah's wife, who was possibly even his own mother. But Noah spared Ham and if Ham escaped the curse, then there is only one place from which the curse could have been transmitted to Canaan. Through her potential to transmit the result of the forbidden genetic liaison to her offspring, the mother was the key site of degeneracy. Although Noah had several wives, it is not clear in the scripture with which of these women Ham slept. This mother was, therefore, an anonymous carrier of blackness and enslavement. While not much was said of how she herself became black, like black African women, she emerged as timeless, spaceless and nameless. All that was clarified about her was that she was defiled and her hybrid offspring were

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<sup>276</sup> David Goldenberg, "What Did Ham Do to Noah?": In *The Words of a Wise Man's Mouth Are Gracious*, ed. Mauro Perani (Boston, MA; Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 4.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.



defiled. As Young notes, “hybrid” racial identities were worrisome because their latent dark race could devolve into their savage state if unmanaged. Hence, racial hybridity “had to be policed with exceptional care.”<sup>278</sup> The Hamitic hypothesis inaugurated the black woman as original sin and emerged as a powerful sexual theory of the races. Her story permitted the reconciliation of the Hamitic Hypothesis and racial narratives.

It is within this historic haunting of the black Hamitic woman that the Tutsi woman came into view in colonial discourse. Speke made one of the earliest and enduring allusions to this lineage when he described the Hamitic genealogy of a number of African peoples:

[T]he Wapoka of Fipa, south of the Rtikwa Lake, are the same. How or when their name became changed from Wahuma to Watusi no one is able to explain; but, again deducing the past from the present, we cannot help suspecting that, in the same way as this change has taken place, the name Galla may have been changed from Hubshi, and Wahtima from Gallas. But though in these southern regions the name of the clan has been changed, the princes still retain the title of Wahinda as in Karague’, instead of Wawitu as in Unyoro, and are considered of such noble breed that many of the pure negro chiefs delight in saying, I am a Mhinda, or prince, to the confusion of travellers, which confusion is increased by the Wahuma habits of conforming to the regulations of the different countries they adopt. For instance, the Wahuma of Uganda and Karague’, though so close to Unyoro, do not extract their lower incisors; and though the Wanyoro only use the spear in war, the Wahuma in Karague are the most expert archers in Africa. *We are thus left only the one very distinguishing mark, the physical appearance of this remarkable race, partaking even more of the phlegmatic nature of the Shemitic father than the nervous boisterous temperament of the Hamitic mother, as a certain clue to their Shem-Hamitic origin* [emphasis mine].<sup>279</sup>

Speke not only located blackness in a matrilineal line, but he also baptized the mother as the source of degeneracy in the African Hamitic stock. The mother about whose ancestry nothing is known had, as Speke puts it, a “nervous and boisterous temperament.” The word “temperament” was a critical choice that hinted at the link between Hamiticism, hybridity and sexuality. The

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<sup>278</sup> Goldenberg, “What Did Ham Do to Noah?”

<sup>279</sup> John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London, UK: William Blackwood and sons, 1863), 251.

word's etymology goes back to the Latin word, "*temperamentum*," or "*temperare*," meaning "to mix, temper."<sup>280</sup> And as Young points out, by 1828, the word "hybrid" was similarly defined as "a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixtures of two species."<sup>281</sup>

The sexual politics of hybridity was preoccupied with fertility, with certain mixtures signaling "diminishing fertility" or eroded intellectual acumen.<sup>282</sup> While nineteenth century science maintained that fertility can take place between all racial types, the general view held that "unions between allied races are fertile, those between distant are either infertile or tend to degeneration."<sup>283</sup> While the original prized paternal pedigree was certainly compromised by the black mother's line, her offspring were slightly better off than her absolute state of abjection precisely because of the paternal line. These offspring would still remain better off in the event that they continue to intermix with those who were proximate to their paternal line. Thus, Hamitic groups inhabited a paradoxical place of degeneracy and elevation. And in this formulation of peoplehood, the fertility of the Hamitic woman signified the threshold between people's survival or demise.

Interestingly in Speke's formulation, the paternal line of the Hamitic Africans was not Caucasians. Rather, they were Semites of a "phlegmatic nature." As Young notes, the notion of "Hebraism" helped negotiate and consolidate white identity, by creating a civilizational historical narrative that split Hebraic and Hellenic people, the former associated with "strictness of

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<sup>280</sup> Merriam Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/temperament> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>281</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, 6.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

consciousness,”<sup>284</sup> as the Speke’s use of the word phlegmatic suggests. The Semite, although distinct from the negroid, was still conservative and archaic, one that had to die so to speak in order for the “open, expansive” white/Hellenic to innovate and progress.”<sup>285</sup> Thus, even the paternal line of the Hamites is a slightly degraded version, which stagnates at some point and can only remain remotely related to whiteness.

### **2.10 Colonial Iconographies of Tutsi Women: The Politics of Culture, Desire and Fear**

The Hamitic woman was a critical tool in assembling race theories. And in the Hamitic discourse of Rwanda, she was almost always attended by aesthetic discourses as well as ideas of fertility. The theory’s preoccupation with hybridity and sexuality speaks to the “intrinsic link between racism and sexuality.”<sup>286</sup> Hence, the colonial representations of Tutsi women serve as important clues for the politics of sexual violence in contemporary times. The colonial iconography of Tutsi women shows them in a highly polarized constellation of allure and danger. While it was not just the women who were eroticized—the men, too, were highly sexualized—the sexualization of Tutsi women signified a sexualization of the social body of the state. And both allure and degeneracy in Tutsi women was linked to their life giving potential and Tutsi fertility was central in the making of a people and in their decline and ruin. It is within this narrow grid of gender and nature that the politics of the nation-state of the entire region came to be negotiated during colonialism and long after the official departure of the Europeans.

#### *Hamitic Tutsi Women and the Allure of Hybridity*

A woman emerged from a dark corner of the room and keep forward toward us,  
her head bent, full of embarrassment.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 9.

“Nyiramasuka, my wife,” Rudahigwa announced...  
She bowed slightly to my wife.... The bow to me was apparently blind, for the  
eyes of the Queen were scrupulously fixed on the floor. I felt myself being taken  
in.<sup>287</sup>

As a discursive tool that helped establish whites at the apogee of human cultural achievement, Hamiticism encompassed all spheres of human development including science, politics and economics, culture and aesthetics. And the aesthetic investments were particularly salient in the narratives about Tutsi women. Although most colonial writers on Rwanda spent a great deal of energy in explaining the life of Tutsi men, especially royal ones, Tutsi women’s appearance in the colonial literature, albeit limited, was nonetheless striking for its eroticism, mystery and ambiguity.

For Attilio Gatti, the queen exemplified Tutsi womanhood. He saw her as “the flower of Watutsi women, beautiful, gentle, intelligent companion of the handsomest monarch of all Africa.”<sup>288</sup> While the queen was the ultimate prize, she was also an approximation of all Tutsi women. Gatti described her and consequently the Tutsi female as “the mistress of the house, the cherished companion and consulted counselor of the husband. To her left all the cares of the house and kitchen, which he accomplishes with the aid of numerous bahutu and batwa servants.”<sup>289</sup> Such narratives attached Tutsi women to the figure of the ruling class and set them apart from other women as overseers. Moreover, these portrayals domesticated their roles and subordinated their status in society. But their naturalized gender role and place in the gender hierarchy was also viewed as a sign of the racial progressivism and distinctiveness of the Hamitic people. This was in sharp contrast to the widely held belief about the negroid’s natural

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<sup>287</sup> Gatti, *Great Mother Forest*, 68-69.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

inclination to abuse women. As the British Royal Navy captain, J. K. Tucky proclaimed, “The worst feature in the negro character, which is a very common one among all savage tribes, is the little estimation in which the female sex is held; or, rather their esteeming them in no other way than as contributing to their pleasures, and to their sloth.”<sup>290</sup> But among the Tutsi, as Gatti reminded his audience, “the wife is not the beast of burden she is with other natives.”<sup>291</sup>

For Felice Bellotti, a prolific travel writer on places like the Belgian Congo, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Australia, the Tutsi woman represented not only beauty but also the racial superiority of the Hamitic people. “Noble and Serene is this Watussi royal beauty,” reads the caption of a picture of a royalty woman’s photograph that Bellotti chose as the cover image for his 1954 book, *Fabulous Congo*.<sup>292</sup> The book, which was mainly about the flora, fauna, wildlife, and peoples of the Belgian colonial territories in the Congo, included over seventy photographs terrifically sensational pictures of the region’s peoples that held great fascination for the colonial reader such as faces mauled by lions, people and with all sorts of markings and tattoos. Although Ruanda-Urundi constituted a very small section of his book, he curiously picked a Tutsi woman for the cover and as the representation of fabulousness. For Belotti, “of the races which inhabit the Congo today only two have clear origins—the Hamites and Nilotics. It is enough to meet a Watussi or see the beautiful profile of their queen, Rosalie Gicanda ... to be convinced that this statement is perfectly true.”<sup>293</sup> The Tutsi woman was brought into the western imagination in her royal role and served a evidence of the historical movement of the human race.

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<sup>290</sup> James Hingston Tuckey and Christen Smith, *Narrative of An Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo* (New York, NY: W.B. Gilley, 1818), 371–72.

<sup>291</sup> Gatti, *Great Mother Forest*, 48.

<sup>292</sup> Bellotti, *Fabulous Congo*.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

The Tutsi woman who was neither white nor black was often a site of not only intense sexual allure but also the mystery and fearsomeness of the hybrid. Upon a chance meeting with a Tutsi royal woman, even the stoic evangelist Paul Schebesta remembered his experience with an erotic awe:

I was travelling along the caravan track up and down the mountain slopes through Ruanda. At a bend in the track, just as we turned to go down into one of the valleys, another caravan met us coming from the opposite direction, in the centre of which was a sedan-chair. I could scarcely believe my eyes when the bearers set the sedan-chair down, and our stepped a bronzed, well-formed, slim girl who, coming towards me with a graceful bow, held out her hand to greet me. This extraordinary politeness of the Batutsi lady astonished me to such a degree that it caused me considerable embarrassment ... After greeting me, the bronzed beauty stepped into her sedan-chair again.<sup>294</sup>

Schebesta went on to describe this incident with the daughter of a Tutsis royal chief, the likes of which he claimed to have never encountered, declared them as an impossibility: “*I would never have considered such unassuming gracefulness possible in the heart of Africa*. Not only the beauty and charm of this Mututsi girl, but also her well-bred manner and her refined bearing captivated everyone present (emphasis mine).”<sup>295</sup> In a sense, the description of the Hamitic Tutsi woman’s body and her mannerisms resembled the same impossibility Egypt posed for earlier theorists of the Hamitic Hypothesis. Like Egypt, she was an impossibility for Africa but like Egypt she stood as a confounding existence that required explication. As Young notes, “the possibility or impossibility of hybridity,” were “covert theories of desire,”<sup>296</sup> marked by both attraction and repulsion. And colonial desire for the hybrid functioned as “a structure of sexual attraction and repulsion”<sup>297</sup> wherein hybrid femininities “were often invoked as the most

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<sup>294</sup> Schebesta, *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts*, 197.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, 9.

beautiful human beings of all.”<sup>298</sup> And hybrid subjects like the Hamitic Tutsi certainly embodied these dual characteristics.

*Atavism, Degeneracy and the Tutsi Queen Mother*

While Tutsi women were the erotic and lovely in colonial images, they also had a more sinister doppelgänger—the queen mother, the quintessential iconography of superstition, vindictiveness, and human regression.<sup>299</sup> The older black mother who, unlike in the west, amassed power in old age, always posed a threat to colonial patriarchal penetration. And the image of Rwanda’s queen mother indeed operated in this tradition of representation. No one captured this positioning than Ruand-Urundi’s queen mother, Kanzogera, the fiercely anti-colonial mother of King Musinga.

By the time Gatti made his way to area in 1933, the Belgians had finally triumphed over King Musinga’s resistance. He had been deposed in 1931 and replaced by his young and pliable son, Rudahigwa. King Musinga’s downfall was exhilarating for Governor Charles Voisin and his admirers like Gatti. But the real feat was the removal of the queen mother. As Gatti recalled, “The governor had come to accomplish what could be called a “legal coup d’état”—to depose the old king, Musinga, long a subtle enemy to the activities of the whites into the progress of his country, manipulated as he was by dominating, superstitious mother.”<sup>300</sup> Behind the throne of the old man was the mysterious and degenerate Hamitic woman, and more specifically, the mother, the most prominent tyrannical figure of the Tutsi feudal system. While colonial visitors

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>299</sup> Holly Hanson, “Queen Mothers and Good Government in Buganda: The Loss of Women’s Political Power in 19th Century East Africa,” in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanike Musisi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 219–36; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

<sup>300</sup> Gatti, *Great Mother Forest*, 64.

eroticized the young Tutsi, her allure merely masked an inherent danger lurking in the shadows of her Hamitic womb. Once a mother, the Tutsi woman represented sheer terror and subjugation.

Missionary Paul Schebesta, who spent several years studying the so-called Pygmies of the Congo, was one of the few visitors who actually met this queen mother during a visit to the Rwandan court in 1929. His recollection of his encounter of the queen, whom he called “Nyirayuhi,” captures this double signification of allure and danger:

Nyirahuhi, although advanced in years, was tall and erect, and carried her age well. The three ladies-in-waiting who stood by her side were dressed in toga-like wraps. ... Her head-dress was embroidered with pearls also and a number of white feathers were artistically arranged about her head. Hanging down from this head-dress were strings of pearls and these formed a kind of veil over the face so that it was not completely visible. ... This elegant head-gear certainly reminded me of the style of dressing in ancient Egypt.<sup>301</sup>

While her dress style and her “veil” was a familiar oriental trope, what also emerged is an association of the Hamitic woman, elegant as she may be, with state brutality. As Schebeta explained, “Cruelty seems to be a characteristic of the Batutsi.... Many an authentic reports of the cruelty of the Batutsi, especially at the royal court in Ruanda, is freely circulated. The mother of Musinga, for example, seems to have been an extraordinarily revengeful woman.”<sup>302</sup> Although Schebesta was not terribly concerned with a political context or actual evidence when arriving to his conclusions, he nevertheless hinted at a connection between cruelty, gender and hamiticism, when he wrote:

It fascinated me to study the court customs of the Ruanda and to trace associations of ideas with Roscoe’s description of the customs of the Uganda court, or to compare them with those ancient Manamatapa, or even of ancient Egypt. Many parallels were plainly manifest, as for example the position of the queen-mother to the king, who was honoured and feared as a demi-goddess.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Schebesta, *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts*, 209–210.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.



The colonial portrayal of the queen mother was in good measure a response to her opposition to colonial penetration. In his diatribe against a growing anti-Belgian colonial rule in Europe, Gatti also invoked the cruel queen mother as the ultimate justification of Belgian violence. To him, the “tender hearts of every country, knowing nothing of Rwanda, of Congo, of Africa even, had found the opportunity for a new outburst of discourses. Musinga was for them a good, innocent old King but a tyrant white country wanted to depose for her own hidden purposes.”<sup>304</sup> For Gatti, these critics were misguided because they had never heard of Kangora, “who took advantage of her position of ‘official mother’ of King Ritalindwa—a son of her husband and another woman—to doom him to perdition.”<sup>305</sup> And like Schebesta before him, Gatti, also carefully detailed the queen mother’s crimes.

Discussions of the queen’s cruelty were also accompanied by attention to her physique, the vehicle onto which her barbarity was imprinted and from which her madness was discernable, even at her most charming and hospitable moments. This is precisely how Schebesta brought the queen mother into visibility when he wrote of his one and only encounter with her at the royal court:

The Nyirayuhi greeted each of one of us with a hearty handshake and a friendly smile, chatting quite unaffectedly in the Kisuaheli tongue. She was certainly a born ruler. I did not doubt for a moment that Misinga was completely in her hands, and from the expression on her face I considered her capable of all the cruelties reported of her. She could be exceptionally kind, but that was all diplomacy. It goes without saying that behind her smile was a hidden resentment that the hated white man should intrude even into the interior of her sanctuary, which was formerly forbidden to all foreigners.<sup>306</sup>

As a figure deceptive in her charm and appearance but an embodiment of degeneracy and

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<sup>304</sup> Gatti, *Great Mother Forest*, 64.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> Schebesta, *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts*, 209.

danger, trust in this Tutsi woman was a clear and present danger to the social body. And what the queen mother endangered, Gatti argued, was no less than “the sacred principles of freedom and self-government, a progress in humanity, a civilized nation in the peace of the world.”<sup>307</sup> But finally, with the efforts of the indefatigable Governor Voisin, “the resistance snapped. The diplomacy, the energy, the authority of the white man triumphed.”<sup>308</sup> As McClintock notes, the “triumph” over the mother “hints at a hidden order underlying industrial modernity: the conquest of sexual and labor power of colonized women.”<sup>309</sup> Furthermore, her dethroning also installed western patriarchy “as the heir to a Imperial ‘progress’ at the head of “family of man”—a family that admits no mother.”<sup>310</sup> The defeat of the queen mother was thus an earlier enabling metaphor in the baptism of the post-independence nation-state as patriarchal.

While the two representational grids of Tutsi women seem contradictory at first glance, they rested of similar allusions. Both images invoked inscrutability, suspicion, and danger. As Ann Stoler notes, colonized women “could be considered both ‘beautiful’ and ‘easy,’ ‘elegant,’ and ‘deceitful,’ ‘finally-modeled,’ and intellectually lacking at the same time to be physically ‘underdeveloped’ and libidinally ‘oversexed’ was not an oxymoron.”<sup>311</sup> And colonial discourse’s double positioning of women was “a domain of knowledge that was productive of, and responsive to, taxonomies of power and a range of desires that articulated unevenly with the

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<sup>307</sup> Gatti, *Great Mother Forest*, 64.often

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 3.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>311</sup> Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 188.

multiple hierarchies of nation, gender, race, and class.”<sup>312</sup> These paradoxical characterizations of Tutsi women shifted based on the challenges colonialists faced. When the cooperation of local elites proved successful as was the case with King Rudahigwa, the emphasis was on the elegance, docility, and feminine restraint of the Tutsi woman. This was the case with Rudahigwa’s blushing wife, Rosalie Gicandawho, was favorably viewed as the suitably domesticated wife of the properly westernized King. But in moments when colonial rule met with transgression and rejection, as was the case with the colonial encounter with Kangora, the Tutsi woman morphed into an obstacle to order and progress. Her social positioning as a mother was presumed so powerful as to explain all the woes of the local people.

As these narratives show, the representation of Tutsi women was a necessary tool of colonial agenda setting and had consequences for contemporary Rwandan politics. They served as a repertoire of racialized and sexualized rhetoric and iconographies for ethnic incitement for the post-independence state. During the struggle for independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, Rwandan nationalism took a decidedly ethnic turn with the dominant political party, the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement (PARMEHUTU) articulating its cause as that of black liberation. PARMEHUTU drew increasingly on the polarized narrative of natives and Hamitic invaders<sup>313</sup> and revived the image of the Tutsi woman as devious and dangerous in central ways. In its now infamous galvanizing propaganda pieces, *The Hutu Ten Commandments*,<sup>314</sup> PARMEHUTU outlined the guidelines for independence from colonial rule of the Belgians and

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Eltringham, ““Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country””; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>314</sup> The full list can be found at “[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu\\_Ten\\_Commandments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hutu_Ten_Commandments), (accessed May 26, 2014).

their Tutsis allies. This Biblically modeled edict for moral and civic membership in the new state listed ten central directives and warnings. Three of these explicitly addressed the role of women in the business of state formation and black liberation. “Every Hutu must know that the Tutsi woman, wherever she may be, is working for the Tutsi ethnic cause. In consequence, any Hutu is a traitor who acquires a Tutsi wife; acquires a Tutsi concubine; acquires a Tutsi secretary or protégée.” So began the very first commandment, linking sexuality, gender order and state security through Tutsi women. Commandment two continued by drawing a diametric opposition between Tutsi and Hutu women, particularly their role as wives and mothers. It continued the theme of gender and national security by politicizing fertility: “Every Hutu must know that our Hutu daughters are more worthy and more conscientious as women, as wives and as mothers. Aren’t they lovely, excellent secretaries, and more honest!”

Praising the domesticity and respectability of Hutu women, the commandment also unequivocally marked Tutsi women’s degeneracy. The domesticity of Hutu women did not threaten the security and purity of the state and was in fact a prerequisite in the positioning of the masculinized and liberated new black state. Commandment seven, too, alluded to an inherent link between Tutsi women and national insecurity: “The Rwandan Army must be exclusively Hutu. No soldier may marry a Tutsi woman.” As the political crisis between the Hutu dominated government and Tutsi exile-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front deepened in the 1990s, the *Hutu Ten Commandments* returned with a vengeance, once again situating Tutsi women at the center of the struggle for the state. It also politicized women’s sexuality and domesticity by casting them into the terrains of state management. While it can be tempting to read these events and gestures as examples of patriarchal nationalism, when considered alongside the colonial narratives about Tutsi women, the sexual politics of contemporary ethnic conflicts become more

complex. The role of empire in the making of rapability begins to come into better focus.

## **2.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I address the articulation of sexual violence in contemporary African conflicts and I argue that the colonial era was a precursor to the widespread use of sexual violence as a tool of war. But rather than looking at colonialism's explicit moments of violence as the evidence to this link, I look at the less obvious but highly productive site of colonial sexual politics of representation. As Mama argues that, "when we consider the history of woman abuse, we must recognize that there have been pernicious continuities between colonial, nationalist, and postcolonial systems."<sup>315</sup> The racist models of ethnicity in Rwanda and throughout the Belgian colonies set up the terms by which citizens can define their difference, articulate their historical grievances and lay claims to the state. As Mamdani notes of post-colonial African nations in general, and Rwanda in particular, this model was not democratized but remained an important feature of the African state.

The circumscribed sexuality and sexual anxieties, which were central tenets of the colonial state, were not only left intact but also resuscitated repeatedly in moments of crisis faced by the state. The invocation of women's sexuality and fertility in the battle for indigeneity and land and the emergence of rape as a war tool during the genocide are neither isolated incidents nor devoid of history. They result partly from colonial codification of race, gender and nation. By taking into account the discursive realm as a site of sexual violation, the colonial representations outlined here speak to a need for developing feminist frameworks to assess GBV.

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<sup>315</sup> Mama, "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa," 61.

## CHAPTER 3

### **“A COCKROACH CANNOT GIVE BIRTH TO A BUTTERFLY:” THE POLITICS OF INDIGENEITY AND FERTILITY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN POPULATION AND REFUGEE DISCOURSES OF PRE-GENOCIDE RWANDA**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In 1962, Rwanda gained independence from Belgian rule, an event that produced one of Africa’s most intractable refugee crises, leading to the exile of some 300,000 Tutsis. By the early 1990s, that figure exceeded 700,000. The extremist Hutu-dominated Rwandan government refused to address the refugee crisis, frequently citing Rwanda’s overpopulation. In Rwanda, where notions of indigeneity recalled colonial racial theories such as the Hamitic Hypothesis, the framing of refugees as invaders and overpopulators was potent and naturalized Hamitic theories as terms of origin and belonging in the post-colonial state.

The Rwandan government’s resolve to redefine the state as the traditional homeland of the Hutu further hardened when in 1963 a group of Tutsi military elites exiled in Burundi attempted a failed armed return back to Rwanda.<sup>316</sup> For the Rwandan state, the Tutsi refugees would remain its biggest political thorn on its side until the 1994 genocide.<sup>317</sup> In 1991, the armed self-repatriation effort by Tutsi refugees living in Uganda further intensified the perception that an already overpopulated Rwanda was about to be overrun by an influx of refugees of the wrong

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<sup>316</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 56.

<sup>317</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

ethnic make up, putting both the population's ethnic balance and its actual size in jeopardy. This fear ended in the genocide of 1994 that led to a million deaths and saw the rape of 250,000 Tutsi women and girls, and kicked off another unprecedented refugee crisis in the DRC.

A long-standing narrative about Rwanda's overpopulation helped to bolster the Hutu state's sense of authentic indigeneity. Since the advent of colonial rule, Rwanda had been considered overpopulated and on the verge of environmental and economic collapse.<sup>318</sup> Even the Rwandan genocide of 1994 had been frequently said to be a result of the stress of population explosion.<sup>319</sup> The linking of Rwanda's refugee crisis to environmental decline and overpopulation was a part of a global trend that saw the consolidation of environmental, population, refugee and national security discourses. In the 1970s, environmental and population advocates began collaborating more frequently with each other and with women's reproductive rights groups. With the demise of communism, population and environmental discourses fused with national security and soon added another threat—refugees. As feminist critiques have noted these new collaborations often co-opted feminist language to control third world women's fertility while ignoring the rapid decline of fertility globally and sidestepping colonial and neoliberal policies as the real culprits in crisis.<sup>320</sup> And these theories of population explosion have effectively sanctioned violence against marginalized women around the world by way of forced sterilizations and the administration of dangerous contraceptives.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*; Hugh O'Haire, "Rwanda: The 'Land of a Thousand Hills' Is Running Out of Space," *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, November 1987.

<sup>319</sup> *Country Assessment Report: A Report Prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Under the Auspices of the AU/NEPAD* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the African Union/NEPAD, March 2008); Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>320</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*.

The collision of refugees and population crisis discourses in Rwanda illuminates the investment of the Rwandan government in a colonially defined ethnic sexual politics. It particularly shows how Tutsi women's sexuality was woven into a regional narrative of national security. Moreover, the entrapment of Rwandan refugees in the politics of population explosion and environmental danger was not limited only to the Rwandan political landscape but was of consequence to the entire great lakes region.

I conduct discourse analysis of population and refugee discourses in the publications of key organizations<sup>322</sup> such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Refugee Watch, Human Rights Watch and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the Arusha Peace Negotiations (The Arusha Accords) to respond to the dissertation question: How did population explosion and refugee crisis discourses of post-independence Rwanda reenact colonial tropes of indigeneity and how did the consolidation of these discourses signify Tutsi women's bodies as sites of danger to indigeneity and national sovereignty?

I frame the concept of population in Foucauldian and critical feminist terms viewing it as a form of biopolitical governmentality that revolves around the regulation of sexuality, fertility and race.<sup>323</sup> And politics of empire was an important genealogy in evolution of the concept as a biopolitical technology. The refugee construct is also a more contemporary form of biopower with a close link to the population construct. And as refugees and refugee camps have

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<sup>321</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*; Smith, *Conquest*; Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*.

<sup>322</sup> A complete list of the primary documents consulted for this chapter can be found in Appendix B

<sup>323</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*; Legg, "Foucault's Population Geographies"; Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*; Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*; Silliman and King, *Dangerous Intersections*; Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*.



proliferated, they have emerged as enemies that can drain the life of the population. And they signal racialized and feminized states of exception.<sup>324</sup> The African refugee has particularly emerged as a feminized form of bare life, at once victim and clear and present danger to state security.<sup>325</sup> As this chapter shows how these African refugee discourses merged with environmental discourses and came to causes of instability to natural population of nation-states and set off wars of scarcity.<sup>326</sup> The refugee as a signifier of danger is, therefore, the ideological offshoot of population discourse.

In the first half of the chapter, I offer the theoretical framework for genealogical reading of population and refugee representations, followed by an examination of how population explosion and refugee crisis discourses unfolded in Rwanda while situating the country's politics in the larger discourse of population and refugees surrounding Africa. I show the centrality of Belgian population discourses and their preoccupation with fertility in the conceptualization of indigeneity. I illustrate how that the interplay between population explosion and refugee crisis in the 1980s and 1990s fused an over-sexualized narrative about Tutsi refugee women and argue that this dynamic served as the backdrop for the mass rape of Tutsi women in the 1994 genocide.

### **3.2 Population, Security and Fertility: Technological Assemblage of Biopower**

Foucault argues that in biopolitical governmentality, population becomes a technology in the management of life and death. The biopolitical state conceptualizes the population as an organism and individuals as its parts. They, like a sick body can continue to live without some of its parts, the population can dispense with individuals and even needs to do so in order to

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<sup>324</sup> Sherene Razack,  *Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics* (University of Toronto Press, 2008).

<sup>325</sup> Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>326</sup> Silliman and King, *Dangerous Intersections*.

presence itself. Thus, the state sees it imperative to kill excess populations who threaten “the biological existence of a population.”<sup>327</sup> Because individual bodies are smaller units of the larger organism of the population, the state intervenes on them to manage elements considered to sap energy and threaten life itself.<sup>328</sup>

Intervention on individual bodies rests on the management of sexuality, the prime activity that exhausts the life force.<sup>329</sup> The state thus meticulously and continually observes sexuality, analyzing types of sexual behavior and developing efforts to redirect people’s sexual behaviors in the service of economics and politics.<sup>330</sup> Governments account for anything from “illegitimate births, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation ... the effects of unmarried life or of the prohibitions.”<sup>331</sup> By presuming a naturalness of population, these interventions also appear non-coercive and often take place outside the purview of the public. In this sense, population appears as variables in political economy, GDPs, and national security. Fertility is especially significant, positioning women’s bodies critically in the biopolitical discourse of population.

The state intervention on bodies to invigorate the population also operates according to a racial logic. As Ann Stoler notes, the colonial context was in the development of the racial politics of the population construct.<sup>332</sup> Vast amounts of demographic data about the colonized served as the basis “ethnological knowledge in the service of colonial control.”<sup>333</sup> And ideas

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<sup>327</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 137.

<sup>328</sup> Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

<sup>329</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>331</sup> Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 33.

<sup>332</sup> Legg, “Foucault’s Population Geographies;” Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

<sup>333</sup> Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 39.

about an “internal enemy” that diminishes the life of the population showed up in the politics of “mixed-blood children, European-educated colonized elites, and even déclassé European colonials who frequently found themselves as the new targets of internal purification.”<sup>334</sup> The internal enemy appeared in discussions of domesticity including child-rearing practices and defined permissible sexuality of colonials so their liaisons did not weaken the life of the race.<sup>335</sup> As Stoler notes, managing the race and sexuality of the population mattered for the defense of society both in the colonies and the metropolis was reflected in the regulation numerous army and military practices.<sup>336</sup>

### **3.3 The Imperial Politics of Population in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Overpopulation and Underpopulation**

Despite the colonial link in population discourses, demographers often downplayed this history. In 1953, the *Population Bulletin*, an annual report published by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), saw a need to better understand the link between migration and population explosion and described the link as follows:

An era of emigration from the Far East to America, Oceania, and Africa began early in the nineteenth century and drew to a close in the first decades of the twentieth century. It has its origin in the abolition of slavery in the British colonies between 1833 and 1838, which created a demand for new sources of cheap labor supply on the plantations and other colonial enterprises. To meet this demand, gangs of indentured laborers from India were imported into Mauritius and Australia, and later into the British West Indies and Guiana. The practice of importing oriental laborers under various forms of labor contracts spread during the nineteenth century to other colonial areas in the tropical and semi-tropical belts, and to South Africa and the North and South American republics. The Chinese joined the movement on an increasing scale after their ports were opened to foreign trade in 1842 and after old laws prohibiting their emigration were

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 40.

repealed from 1859 and 1860. The Japanese followed suit after the legalization of foreign trade and emigration from Japan in 1866.<sup>337</sup>

This was one of the few acknowledgements of colonialism's impact on mass migration in the report but it grossly underestimated the imperial role in driving populations and destabilizing regional demographic constitutions. For one thing, the study delimited the colonial timeline between 1833 and 1838, rendering invisible the fact that even in 1953, the year of the report's publication, much of the world was still under colonial rule. The study also distorted the colonial context of migration such as China's "opening" to foreign trade, which was in good measure the result of sustained French and British imperial efforts to conquer the mainland.<sup>338</sup> The racial politics of colonial indentured servitude was also emptied out of the *Population Bulletin's* formulation of migration as population crisis. Western countries' racialized and gendered immigrant policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 or the various ordinances in the East Asian British colonies were also detached from their colonial logic and instead framed as local and contemporary events. For instance, in its account of Chinese migration to the US the *Population Bulletin* states, "[a]fter 1884, there was an abrupt decline of Chinese arrivals due to the restrictive laws of 1882."<sup>339</sup> This account emphasized migration and population change largely as features of labor and capital movement and offered a sanitized history of migration that made population appear like "natural" phenomena.

Ahistorical frameworks of population also overlooked how European colonial expansion itself was justified within a discourse of population crisis. As Asoka Bandarge notes, narratives of exploding populations were crucial in justifying the Europe's expansionist into foreign

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<sup>337</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations* (New York, NY: United Nations, 1953), 13.

<sup>338</sup> Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (New York, NY; London, UK: I. B. Tauris, 2007).

<sup>339</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1953, 15.

lands,<sup>340</sup> and remained a feature of even twentieth century demographic transition theories.<sup>341</sup> For instance, in 1929, demographer Warren Thompson reasoned that because newly industrializing countries were going to follow the West's demographic trend of initially population dip followed by a spurt in the growth rate, they would need to expand into new territories.<sup>342</sup> Warren's theory was received coolly at the time but only because he was trying to justify colonial aspirations of Imperial Japan.<sup>343</sup> But barring his support for a nonwestern empire, Warren was merely advancing the prevailing European expansionist approach.

Europe's colonial ventures also relied on the idea of underpopulation. While overpopulation often informed the drive to export excess populations, underpopulation justified the occupation of colonial territories. *Terra nullius* or the idea that the conquered lands were not populated and were free for the taking, helped bring the Americas, Australia and Africa under European control and justify the displacement of native people.<sup>344</sup> Even as recently as the 1980s, demographers were perpetuating this idea. For instance, in 1983 the *Population Bulletin* declared that “[m]ost third world countries have a population problem, and Bolivia is no exception. But Bolivia's difficulties are unusual—it needs more people.”<sup>345</sup> The report argued that “[w]ith less

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<sup>340</sup> Bandarage, “Population and Development.”

<sup>341</sup> According to demographic transition theory, “societies undergo industrialization and related economic and social developments, their fertility is little affected, according to the theory, until a fairly high level of development is reached; then the factors maintaining high fertility give way and fertility drops to a much lower level.” *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1963, No. 7, p. 1

<sup>342</sup> Dennis Hodgson and Susan C. Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians: Past and Present Alliances,” *Population and Development Review* 23, no. 3 (1997): 477.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*.

<sup>345</sup> Francklin Fernandez, “Bolivia Needs More Peoples—But Where?,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, 1983, 2.

than six million people living in over a million square kilometers, Bolivia was an uninhabited country”<sup>346</sup> whose emptiness had consequences for its sovereignty. The *Population Bulletin* further claimed that it was “essential that the population increase substantially over a relatively short period of time”<sup>347</sup> and invoked *terra nullius* to advocate the migration of those with substantial resources, mostly rich western investors who can develop the country. By proclaiming a largely indigenous land too sparse, demographers re-invoked the very principle that justified the occupation of the entire Americas and implicitly called into question indigenous ownership of the territory.

Underpopulation was also an important rhetoric for various colonial labor policies. As Bandarage notes, in many cases “colonial state policies were strongly pro-natalist—for example, equating the value of African slave women with ‘breeding power.’”<sup>348</sup> Importing indentured servants often followed strict control of gender quotas that favored male laborers.<sup>349</sup> For instance, the British frequently limited migration to their Far East colonies from places like from India and China such as Malaysia only to male workers.<sup>350</sup> Similarly, the US restricted Chinese women’s migration until 1850s, nearly two decades after Chinese men’s arrival.<sup>351</sup> The

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Francklin Fernandez, “Population,” 2.

<sup>348</sup> Bandarage, “Population and Development,” 25.

<sup>349</sup> Dennis Hodgson and Susan C. Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians,” 477.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Hyun Yi Kang, *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001); Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

prohibition of women's migration from the colonies was often relaxed to assuage the fear that nonwhite men would take sexual advantage of white women.<sup>352</sup>

The interplay between underpopulation and overpopulation discourses continued to animate the politics of race and fertility throughout the twentieth century. The fear of migration, race and population explosion was important for early Malthusian advocates who exploited it to garner public support for their cause.<sup>353</sup> In fact, the pivotal moment for the early birth control movement came when Malthusians and white feminist birth control advocates joined forces with the message of curtailing the population explosion of the poor, the disabled, the racial other, indigenous peoples and immigrants.<sup>354</sup> As Dennis Hodgson and Susan Cotts Watkins argue, birth control advocates were “population composition warriors”<sup>355</sup> whose goal was to disseminate birth control in order to “balance out” the racial and class composition of the Western population.<sup>356</sup>

By the 1920s, the overpopulation of racial and class degenerates was no longer the only Malthusian battle cry. Prompted by the overall decline in fertility of all class and ethnic groups in the west, Malthusian rhetoric focused on “population composition rather than fear of overpopulation” and especially worried about declining birth rates for white women.<sup>357</sup> In the US, demographers worried that the average American woman not having enough children “to

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<sup>352</sup> Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

<sup>353</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*; Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*; Silliman and King, *Dangerous Intersections*; Angela Y Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1983).

<sup>354</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*; Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*.

<sup>355</sup> Hodgson and Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians,” 473.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

maintain a stationary population.”<sup>358</sup> Their use of birth control generated white racial anxiety and knowledge about their fertility became a significant part of the state’s management of life. The fear of an expanding nonwhite population was constructed alongside a fear of white depopulation.

The end of the second World War (WWII) ushered in a new phase and a new site for the population control—the third world.<sup>359</sup> While Nazi eugenics had somewhat altered the open Malthusian language of population control, the post-WWII era saw an intensification of overpopulation discourses regarding the global south.<sup>360</sup> Powerful US-based academics and population control advocates began an intense collaboration to link population, fertility and the global south. Universities such as Princeton, foundations like the Rockefellers and even reproductive rights organizations such as Planned Parenthood, hoped to establish a transnational network in order to advance knowledge about the impact of population growth on development and to create a favorable environment to view birth control as a viable policy.<sup>361</sup> Third world population growth was believed to be not only the culprit behind third world poverty, but also an lightning rod for social discontent and communism.<sup>362</sup> As UNFPA argued,

Generally speaking, in the developing countries (most of which have high fertility) the distinction between upper and lower classes is very sharp and the middle class, which in theory, represents the link for the diffusion of new ideas and behavior patterns between the small upper class and minority and those of low socioeconomic status, is relatively small.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 476.

<sup>359</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1953.

<sup>360</sup> Hodgson and Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians.”

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 479.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.



The only way to contain the spread of communism to an oversized, susceptible lower-class of the third world was through “the reduction of fertility among the rural masses and the urban lower classes that will bring important declines in national birth rates.”<sup>364</sup> The old Malthusian war against the fertility of the poor was finally waged in the global arena.

By the 1970s, the UN had become the flagship institution disseminating alarm about third world population explosion. UNFPA convened a number of meetings on the subject beginning with Bucharest in 1974, followed by Mexico City in 1984 and Cairo in 1994. And as scholars have noted, despite the increased attention to feminist and human rights language of reproductive choice and women’s rights in some of these meetings such as the Cairo conference, the UN conferences were dominated by “neo-Malthusian subtext”<sup>365</sup> premised on nineteenth century reasoning. As Hartman notes, even the Cairo Conference, which had a forceful women’s rights agenda “essentially left intact the old understanding of population growth as a principal drain on social, economic and environmental resources.”<sup>366</sup>

With the UN in the lead, third world leaders were increasingly coming on board. And more and more of the globe’s region were becoming worrisome. Even Africa, where population growth was generally believed to be either stagnant or not very well known, was enfolded in the explosion narrative.<sup>367</sup> Even if some populations had not exploded yet, surely they were bound to

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<sup>363</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, July 1956), 129.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> Hodgson and Watkins, “Feminists and Neo-Malthusians,” 469.

<sup>366</sup> Betsy Hartmann, “The Changing Faces of Population Control,” in *Policing the National Body: Race, Gender and Criminalization in the United States*, ed. Anannya Bhattacharjee and Jael Silliman (South End Press, 2002), 262.

do so with increased industrialization; preemptive intervention was therefore wise policy. The collapse of communism in the late 1980s shifted national security discourses, which fused with discourses of population growth and environmental threats. And this discursive collusion expanded state investment in global south women's bodies, which were said to account for conflicts all over the global south including those in Haiti, Rwanda and the Chiapas, Mexico.<sup>368</sup> As Hartman notes, environment and security assumed "a supposed causal relationship among population pressure, resource scarcities and intrastate conflict in the South."<sup>369</sup> And by the 1980s, the new environmental-population-national security discourse enfolded yet another threat—the refugee.

### **3.4 Population Discourses on Africa: Primordial Wombs and State Crisis**

Until the mid-1950s, Asian countries such as India and China dominated the population explosion discourse and policy. Africa was treated as either a low fertility region or one where little information existed about its population patterns. However, by the time African countries began to move toward independence in 1960s and 70s, the overpopulation fear was no longer confined to the eastern countries. African population growth was also taking center stage. In its 1963 issue of the *Population Bulletin*, UNFPA signaled the emergence of Africa a key battleground, declaring:

There has been a considerable improvement during the last decade in information on fertility in the economically less developed regions of the world. Approximate values of crude birth rates and gross reproduction rates have been established for

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<sup>367</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations: With Special Reference to Conditions and Trends of Fertility in the World* (New York: United Nations, 1963).

<sup>368</sup> Betsy Hartmann, "Population, Environment, and Security: A Trinity," in *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development*, ed. Ynestra King and Jael Silliman (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

many countries, especially in Africa, where the level of fertility was previously a matter of conjecture. There new indications have been obtained in some cases by means of household sample survey inquiries on births and deaths, while in other cases population censuses or demographic sample surveys have for the first time provided data on age structure of the population from which estimates of the fertility level could be derived. *Thus it has become possible to chart previously unknown territories on the world map of fertility and related factors in the less developed regions.*<sup>370</sup> [emphasis mine]

The report identified “a belt of exceedingly high fertility” in all four corners of the continent, especially in countries like Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Rwanda, Kenya and the Sudan.<sup>371</sup> African women’s bodies once entered the official population explosion discourse in the same old language of “unknown territory” and danger. And as was the case in colonial narratives, Africa’s progress would depend on the taming of African female sexuality and reproduction.<sup>372</sup>

By the 1980s, the big concern for demographers was how exceedingly fertile African nations were failing to curtail fertility. The UN was officially worried that population programs in these countries were only concerned about “mother and child health care to reduce mortality” and that African leaders did not focus sufficiently on the most important task of fertility reduction.<sup>373</sup> In a 1981 report, UNFP’s Assistant Executive Director, Dr. Nafid Sadik, complained that African governments had been resistant to the term “family planning” and more concerned with “proper spacing.”<sup>374</sup> Ironically, the UN also framed African birth spacing

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<sup>370</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1963, 1.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>372</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>373</sup> “Planning, Training Priorities for Family Planning Assistance in 1980s,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, March 1981, 3.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

practices as pioneering forms of reproductive control. But it also argued that ultimately their potential effectiveness was compromised by another African tradition—kinship systems. The report contended that the “strong emphasis on kinship groups which is characteristic of tropical African societies is believed to favor high fertility.”<sup>375</sup> It further claimed that “[b]oth patrilineal and matrilineal kinship systems” held similar aims of “continuance of the kinship group through legitimate heirs, and the birth of numerous progeny and health of the group as well as of perpetuating the lineage.”<sup>376</sup> Consequently, African birth control practices were less effective than European ones.<sup>377</sup> But by UNFPA’s own admission the causal relationship between African kinship and over-fertility was not yet proven.<sup>378</sup> The link between African kinship and high fertility was just in the realm of possibilities that might explain population explosion, predisposing the theory of African population growth to emphasize kinships as critical variables in overpopulation.

Furthermore, this theory offered no consideration of how colonialism may have affected fertility patterns. For instance, the *Population Bulletin* claimed that in some places like South Africa, traditional taboos postponing childbirth during extended lactation have weakened, thereby driving up fertility rates.<sup>379</sup> However, it failed to account for the effects of colonialism and apartheid on labor, habitation and family configurations. In places like South Africa, white supremacists and eugenicists aimed to restrict or annihilate native fertility and movement, the

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<sup>375</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1963, 22.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1963, 8.

<sup>378</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, 1963

<sup>379</sup> *Population Bulletin of the United Nations: With Special Reference to Conditions and Trends of Fertility in the World.*

UN did not consider if Africans may have altered their cultural practices such as child spacing as a form of colonial resistance. Additionally, while the report indicted African kinship systems for the birth control practices they produced, it exempted European supremacist kinship practices that produced effective birth control from the rhetoric of kinship.

In the end, the UN reasoned that even though African framing of population issues in terms of child spacing were inadequate, child spacing mattered to African societies who even traditionally practice it in various forms. Thus, it decided to increase maternal and childcare and through child spacing frameworks by 1986. The question of “how to build on that tradition and introduce modern contraception into it” remained, however, and the UN determined to study African reproductive habits and determine what aspect “can be influenced.”<sup>380</sup>

The linkage of tradition, population growth and contraception in the UN framework points to two discursive developments. First, Africa’s population problem was directly connected to women’s sexuality. And second, population control in Africa came under many “women’s empowerment” appellations such as “maternal and childcare,” masking the coercive impulse of fertility control agendas. The UN grounded its plan to document African reproductive behavior within the framework of autonomy and agency, maintaining that the goal of these studies was to “use existing values rather than trying to change them” and that people should not be coerced to control their fertility.<sup>381</sup> While population control projects often relied on female empowerment concepts like reproductive rights, maternal health and birth spacing, the UN’s own language betrayed that its policies were ultimately a calculation of efficiency. As it put it, reframing existing culture was easier than “changing the value system first and is for that reason alone

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<sup>380</sup> “Planning, Training Priorities for Family Planning Assistance in 1980s,” 3.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

more desirable.”<sup>382</sup> The proliferation of women’s health projects in Africa such as women’s family planning programs were, therefore, important technologies of controlling women’s fertility without appearing coercive.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the UN poured a great deal of resources into shifting the attitude of African governments on fertility control. In 1984, UNFPA declared, “the expansion of population programmes in Africa” was one of its main targets for the decade, picking thirty-three of its fifty-three priority countries from the continent.<sup>383</sup> By mid-1980s, the UN had made significant gains in persuading reluctant African governments to take the link between fertility and overpopulation seriously. African heads of state officially expressed their concern about population growth, and in addition to promoting child spacing, began advocating fertility planning important projects for the strength of both the family and the nation. For instance, in 1984 Swazi chiefs came on board because, as one District Commissioner put it, “[t]here is great need for chiefs, as leaders to keep up with modern ways which are vital to the development of a country.”<sup>384</sup> The Commissioner argued that otherwise “chiefs are an obsolete concept, primordial even, if they don’t change their ways.”<sup>385</sup> Controlling fertility, therefore, became a tool by which African chiefs got a modern makeover. Kenya’s vice-president and Minister of Finance, Mwai Kibai, took a slightly different narrative, articulating population control as rational choice. He argued that “[e]very rational citizen must want to have the size of

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> “Africa Gets Down to Business,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, January 1984, 1.

<sup>384</sup> “Swazi Chiefs to Promote Family Life Planning,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, April 1984, 4.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

family which he or she is capable of bringing up to a standard of which he will be proud.”<sup>386</sup> The implication was that those with large families were irrational. This was a particularly bold claim to make in a country where the rural population was the majority. While Kibaki framed population control as rational outcome, Zimbabwe’s President, Robert Mugabe, made it clear that rationality and coercion go hand in hand. At the 1986 Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference on Agricultural Development and Food Security in Africa in Harare, President Mugabe urged African nations to remove “cultural forces allowing for higher birth rates so that the individual couples may regard it as natural to have manageable families.”<sup>387</sup>

The UNFPA responded by lavishing praise on African governments that accepted “the need for urgent attention to population as one aspect of reconstruction and development.”<sup>388</sup> The World Bank, too, commended these leaders but also warned, “Africa’s population is growing so rapidly that it is threatening the continent’s efforts in social and economic development and poses a danger to the health and well being of its people.”<sup>389</sup> After years of direct lobbying by the United Nations, the World Bank and a host of other international institutions, African countries finally came on board, systematically enfolded women’s reproduction systematically into their state mandate. Thus, African population management policies officially shifted toward a state politics of sexuality.

In the mid-1980s, the population discourse on Africa had also found new iterations. Population growth, now almost exclusively understood in terms of women’s fertility, was

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<sup>386</sup> “Boost For Family Planning in Africa,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, August 1981, 1.

<sup>387</sup> “Zimbabwe Leader Warns of Severe Resource Shortage,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, January 1987, 1.

<sup>388</sup> “Africa’s Rapid Population Growth Rate Threatens Future Development,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, August 1986, 4.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

believed to threaten not only development and resource allocation, but also the security of sovereign states. As the 1986 Vienna Statement on Population, Development and Peace proclaimed, “[t]he issues of population and development and peace are closely related,” because “[t]he imbalance between development process and population growth is one of the major contributing factors to inhuman conditions of life in many areas.”<sup>390</sup> The link between population growth and mass migration also reemerged. The movement of people was considered a cause of environmental degradation, which in turn was said to destabilize peace and security. Thus, effective population measures would decrease movements and fertility, thereby relieving stressed environments and ultimately averting social conflict.

While the link between migration and population had concerned demographers for a long time, by the 1980s it was the migration of a new group of people that threatened environmental damage and peace—refugees. In 1981, UNFP’s African Parliamentarians’ Conference on Population and Development held in Nairobi, Kenya—an event attended by twenty-six African and ten non-African countries—highlighted an “acute awareness of the critical situation in Africa caused by high fertility levels.”<sup>391</sup> And noting that half of the world’s ten million refugees resided in Africa, the conference urged that “the uneven spatial distribution of the population, particularly the increasing pace of urbanization and the grave refugee situation on the continent” be addressed.<sup>392</sup> By the mid 1980s, African population conferences were

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<sup>390</sup> “Vienna Statement on Population, Development and Peace,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, July 1986, 4.

<sup>391</sup> “Births, Migrations Concern Africa,” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, July 1981, 4.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*



recommending that population reduction efforts aim to reduce fertility and “find solution to the refugee problem.”<sup>393</sup>

### **3.5 African Refugees: Pure Victim and Pure Danger**

The World’s refugee crisis is generally believed to be a post-WWII phenomenon.<sup>394</sup> The war saw the displacement of unprecedented number of people, especially in Europe and Asia. The aftermath did not bring relief, with new conflicts producing millions more displaced people. The 1948 partition of India and Pakistan and the Israeli invasion of Palestine produced waves of displaced people.<sup>395</sup> And beginning the 1950s, the imperialist and communist wars in Vietnam, Korea, Cambodia and many parts of Southeast Asia continued the large-scale internal and cross-border dislocations of people.<sup>396</sup> The growing crisis prompted the UN to establish the Refugee Convention, the supreme legal document protecting the rights of refugees in 1951. By the 1960s, African independence movements were adding waves of refugees, with Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Rwanda setting off the first of these mass movements.<sup>397</sup> The 1970s and 1980s saw the number of refugee producing countries grew exponentially: Afghanistan, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Tibet, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Mozambique,

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<sup>393</sup> “African Population Conference Call: ‘Reduce Fertility and Mortality,’” *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, January 1984, 4.

<sup>394</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (Paris, France: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1952).

<sup>395</sup> Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, Reissue edition (New York, NY: Vintage, 1992).

<sup>396</sup> *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (New York: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1960).

<sup>397</sup> Gaim Kibreab, *African Refugees: Reflections on the African Refugee Problem* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1985).

Angola, South Africa, among others, were experiencing internal and external displacements on epic scales.<sup>398</sup> But by 1985, Africa would supersede all other regions as the epicenter of refugee crisis, home to fifty percent of the world's ten million refugees.<sup>399</sup>

The identification of the WWII period as the origin of refugees has led scholars to call refugees and refugee camps as a new technology of biopower.<sup>400</sup> But despite the distinctiveness of the post WWII refugee movement and experience, the making of refugees predates WWII and goes back to the era of empire. As Gaim Kibreab notes, the transatlantic slave raids as well various colonial conquests are also a part of the refugee genealogy.<sup>401</sup> One distinctly contemporary feature of the refugee, however, is its ideological connection to a naturalized notion of the nation-state that marks refugees as sources of political instability. The power of biopolitical state lies in its interplay between the management of life and the ability to declare states of exception. As Razack notes states of exception enable the erosion of rights and the over-policing or elimination of enemies in the name of national security and conflict.<sup>402</sup> And because of they are closely connected to conflicts, states of exception are fundamentally about politics and not strictly a matter of legal measures.<sup>403</sup> For states of exception, borders are critical spaces in which subjects are produced as bare life, a type of stripped down humanity that does not fit the

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<sup>398</sup> *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (New York, NY: United Nations, 1985).

<sup>399</sup> Kibreab, *African Refugees*; Elias H. O. Ayiemba and John O. Oucho, *The Refugee Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa: What Are the Solutions?* (African Population and Environmental Institute with assistance from Japan International Cooperation Agency, Population Education Promotion Project, 1995).

<sup>400</sup> Razack, *Casting Out*; Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 52.

<sup>401</sup> Kibreab, *African Refugees*.

<sup>402</sup> Razack, *Casting Out*, 11.

<sup>403</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

objective of the state. The sovereign's objective then becomes the transformation of bare life into a worthwhile life.<sup>404</sup> And as Giorgio Agamben notes, for the state, such populations emerge as forms of expendable life without the state "committing homicide."<sup>405</sup> In this sense, bare life is at the core of the legitimacy of the nation-state as the sovereign entity that acts on the population. Populations imagined as outside of the state's boundaries are thus treated as causes of instability and necessitate states of exception.

In states of exception, the "suspensions of the rule of law turn on a logic that normative citizens must be protected from those who threaten the social order, a category to which race gives content."<sup>406</sup> In these sites, large numbers of exiled peoples, mostly of the global south, are without political legibility. And their "eviction from political community is legally authorized and inspired by a sense of permanent emergency and endless war."<sup>407</sup> In the contemporary era, these sites have included immigrant detention centers, terror suspect prisons, and refugee camps.<sup>408</sup> Although not all refugees are in camp contexts, Razack's insight about the link between states of exception, the politics of bare life and race is proves a helpful framework to understand the "discursive externalization of the refugee from the national order of things ("forced out", the "refugee," "limbo," "refugee worked," etc)."<sup>409</sup> As displaced figures, refugees are victims. But as rootless people, they are without a home and territory, a type of excess life.

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<sup>404</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>406</sup> Razack, *Casting Out*, 13.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 9.

And this image persists even within the discourse generated by refugee advocates.<sup>410</sup> In these sites of permanent threat, laws are suspended and state of exception reigns. Therefore, for the biopolitical state the refugee is a rootless aberration and excess that threatens the natural population.

### **3.6 Indigeneity In African Refugee Discourses**

The politics of refugees around the world has often been attached to questions of ethnic indigeneity and state membership. This has been especially true in Africa, where colonial notions of indigeneity have been at the heart of most conflicts and of rhetoric that frames refugees as cultureless externalities to the state.<sup>411</sup> In one of its early reports, the World Refugee Watch made the link between colonialism, ethnic conflict, and nation-state formation in the making of refugees arguing, “[i]n the process of creating new states, departing colonial powers often exacerbated existing tribal or ethnic tensions by hand-picking a single ethnic group to leave in control.”<sup>412</sup> As the report pointed out, the aspiration of newly independent states for a monolithic or highly stratified ethnic state was endorsed by colonialists and played a significant role in the politics of refugees.

While departing colonials supported some preferred ethnic groups, the World Refugee Watch overlooked how colonial rule itself reinvented certain notions ethnicity and redefined ideas of territory and membership in the colonies. As Mamdani notes, indigeneity was the hallmark of indirect colonial rule and it continued to plague colonial states in numerous ways,

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<sup>410</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*.

<sup>411</sup> Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities”; Malkki, *Purity and Exile*; Jason W. Clay, “Ethnicity: Powerful Factor in Refugee Flows,” *World Refugee Survey*, Arlington, VA: UN Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, 1984.

<sup>412</sup> Clay, “Ethnicity: Powerful Factor in Refugee Flows,” 11.

including as a form of “the litmus test for rights,” “a test for justice, and thus for entitlement,” and a way to establish a “regime of customary law with Africa’s authentic tradition.”<sup>413</sup> In the politics of the nation-state and refugees, indigeneity becomes a vehicle of what Malkki calls “mythico-historical narratives,” which are ways for states and refugees alike to recount and evaluate historical events in terms of morality and purity.<sup>414</sup>

As uprooted subjects, refugees call into deep question the moral and natural order of the places in which they are exiled. But their rootlessness also allows their home states to consolidate naturalized narratives of their indigenous populations. Indeed, the regional disruption precipitated by refugees is evident in the way a number of central African dictators deployed refugees to indigenize their rule. For instance, in the former Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko’s oscillation on Congolese indigeneity was pegged to the question of Rwandan Tutsi refugees and cultural authenticity. As Mamdani notes, throughout Zaire “one had to decide which ethnic groups were indigenous and which ones were not, for only the former would have a right to a native authority of their own.”<sup>415</sup> Several types of indigeneity emerged around the speakers of Kinyarwanda, Rwanda’s language: the Banyarutshuru, were those whose presence predated Belgian colonization and who were considered indigenous while the Banyamasisi were those migrated to Congo as labor migrants during the colonial period and were precluded from citizenship.<sup>416</sup> The post-independence Rwandan refugees were clearly not indigenous. In 1972 Mobutu switched his position, determining citizenship by how long one has been a resident and

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<sup>413</sup> Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities,” 657.

<sup>414</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 54.

<sup>415</sup> Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities,” 658.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

qualifying those who migrated at the time of Rwanda's independence in 1959 for citizenship.<sup>417</sup> But by 1991, he backtracked again, relinking Congolese indigeneity to ancestry that dating back to the colonial era.<sup>418</sup> This policy effectively barred the large post 1959 Rwandan refugee community from political membership in the DRC—no small feat for Mobutu given the vast resources to which refugees could no longer lay claim. As Mamdani notes, post-independence Congo ratified “the establishment of the colonial state of Congo as its official date of birth, the state establishing the line of demarcation between those to be considered indigenous to the land and those to be considered immigrants.”<sup>419</sup>

Refugees themselves are also embroiled in narratives of indigeneity. As Malkki's work on Burundian Hutu refugees living in Tanzanian refugee camps illustrates, in response to Tanzania's stifling camp surveillance, Hutu refugees radicalized the mythico-historical narratives of indigeneity in ways that recalled colonial notions of indigenous Hutu natives and Hamitic Tutsi outsiders. This narrative was exacerbated by the oppressive conditions of Tanzanian camp life where refugees faced severe restriction on their mobility and economic activity. But among town Hutu refugees who had better opportunities to integrate within their new communities, mythico-historical narratives were missing. However, the notion of indigeneity in the camps had grave consequences not only for Burundi's political landscape but also for Rwanda's. In 1994, Hutu refugees from Tanzania's camps made ideal recruits in Rwanda's killing fields.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities.”

<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 658.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis; Des Forges, Leave None to Tell the Story*.

Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda, too, were adopting a mythico-historical narrative of indigeneity. Uganda's failure to dismantle its colonial inheritance of the settler/native identity fell on Uganda-born Tutsi refugees who attempted an armed return to their indigenous land in 1990, setting off Rwanda's civil war.<sup>421</sup> The indigeneity question underlying the refugee crisis illustrates that for many African countries, the baptism of the state and its foundational narratives are wrapped up in the colonial experience.

### **3.7 Bare Life and the Feminization of the African Refugee**

The image of African refugees and their signification as threats to the population were also marked by sexual politics. As Maalki shows, the iconography of the hyphenated women-and-children African refugee is often "stripped of the specificity of culture, place and history" and represents what it means to be "human in the most basic, elementary sense."<sup>422</sup> This image of the African refugee as a feminized form of bare life did not merely reflect the numeric dominance of women and children in the composition of refugees, however. It also had "enormous significance for the displaced people themselves," especially in terms of mobilizing empathy and resources.<sup>423</sup> While the portrayal of refugees in a sympathetic narrative matters to refugee assistance projects, this image takes shape within a discursive field of other hegemonic and normalizing narratives of gender and nature.

Even though African refugees are characterized as feminine and vulnerable, the refugee habitat is a place where presumably natural gender orders and sexuality spiral out of control.

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<sup>421</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>422</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 12.

<sup>423</sup> Kathleen Newland, *Refugees: The New International Politics of Displacement* (Worldwatch Institute, 1981), 7.

Where refugees live, women outnumber men and hence cause gender imbalances and turn family configurations upside down. As a refugee expert put it, “women no longer have a hearth to maintain, and extended family relationships cannot be maintained in the regimented living situation.”<sup>424</sup> Refugees are also said to disrupt local kinship systems, often earning them labels such as “outsiders, traitors or emergency victims” their presence sows suspicion, which then anchors into the community’s fabric.<sup>425</sup> Women’s survival activities, like liquor brewing, selling goods or sex work brand them as sexually and morally loose.<sup>426</sup> And their male offspring are perceived as future invading armies.<sup>427</sup> Consequently, they disrupt a range of indigenous, authentic and wholesome institutions such as marriage and kinship.<sup>428</sup> The perception of women as liabilities and disruptors of gender and ethnic orders points to another discourse about degeneracy of nature and the weakening of the national body politic. Cultural dislocation, even if happens through no control of one’s own and victimizes refugees the most, is still a threat to traditional order and the nation’s vigor. And in African politics where tradition and culture are presumed synonymous with natural patterns of indigeneity, to lose culture is to inhabit the realm of the unnatural.

The image of feminized danger and disruption associated with African refugees often reassembles old colonial narratives of fertility, sexuality and security in a new discursive terrain. As Chapter 2 shows, in the colonial imagination, African women’s bodies, whether in movement or in their presumed state of nature, were believed to dampen humanity’s march toward progress.

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<sup>424</sup> Winter, “Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda,” 29.

<sup>425</sup> Ayiemba and Oucho, *The Refugee Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 17.

<sup>426</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*; Ayiemba and Oucho, *The Refugee Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

<sup>427</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>428</sup> Ayiemba and Oucho, *The Refugee Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa*.



And the African women's bodies were essential in defining native authenticity and peoplehood and controlling their fertility was a critical part of economic, military and moral order. Hence, feminized African refugees reenacted the oldest colonial iconography of African woman as "a native gone amok"<sup>429</sup> unless put under strict surveillance.

### **3.8 New Discursive Convergences of State Insecurity: Population Growth, Refugees and Environmental Crisis**

By the 1980s, alarmist discourses about population growth began to merge with rhetorics of refugee and environmental crisis. Populationists were concerned about refugees' impact on population explosion, refugee advocates worried about the impact of environmental decline on the refugee crisis and environmentalists viewed both refugees and population growth as the reason for the global environmental degradation. In a 1981 study on refugees, the World Watch Institute, argued for instance:

Because the world has become more densely populated—with half as many people today as there were in 1960—the odds are higher that large numbers of people will be caught in the cross fire whenever shooting starts. Rivalry over land and resources has intensified, spurred by the need to satisfy the requirements and aspirations of growing populations. And poverty holds more people than even in its grip, providing a fertile breeding ground for tensions that can erupt into violence between and within countries. Even the search for solutions to these basic problems can lead to refugee-producing conflict, as ideological disputes over development strategies degenerate into shooting matches.<sup>430</sup>

This study was selected for the UN's *Population Bulletin* important book review section, marking the beginning of a consolidation of population growth, refugee crisis and political crisis between various international agencies and among scholars.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 15.

<sup>430</sup> Newland, *Refugees*, 5.

<sup>431</sup> "Books," *Population Bulletin*, June 1981, 4.

By the early 1990s, environmental groups and refugee agencies were joining forces more frequently. For instance, the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil worked closely with UNHCR in order to “reflect on the relationship between environmental degradation and refugee movements.”<sup>432</sup> While UNHCR noted that environmental destruction in fact produces a refugee crisis, it articulated the link between the environment and refugees as a two way street, where dispossessed refugees can also be major sources of environmental degradation. The report argued that since most refugees were concentrated in “ecologically fragile areas,” they cause “a tremendous strain on the environment”<sup>433</sup>

In an ironic twist, refugee organizations such as UNHCR also began by collaborating with development groups such as the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to address the environmental destruction wrought by refugees.<sup>434</sup> These neoliberal institutions were the architects of notorious policies such as structural adjustment, cash cropping, land grabbing, seed patenting and privatization that directly degraded the environment, exacerbated poverty and increased armed conflict all over the developing world.<sup>435</sup> But there was no mistake that the discourse of refugees as environmental threat was reserved for the third

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<sup>432</sup> *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (New York, NY: United Nations, 1994), 20.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>434</sup> *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 1994.

<sup>435</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997); Silliman and King, *Dangerous Intersections*; Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000); Joseph E Stiglitz, *The Stiglitz Report: Reforming the International Monetary and Financial Systems in the Wake of the Global Crisis* (New York, NY; London, UK: The New Press, 2011).

world, the originator of “the vast majority of refugees” since WWII.<sup>436</sup> This new alliance between environmentalists, refugee agencies and neoliberal development agencies minimized the overconsumption of the West and the direct consequence of this overconsumption on the global environmental crisis. Instead, polluters emerged as the champions of the environment they were helping to destroy.

The linkage of security, environment, population and refugee also made the control of women’s sexuality a high-stakes mandate in the state politics and nationalisms and also revived old reproductive and population control alliances.<sup>437</sup> These groups co-opted feminist language of reproductive rights to coercively control the fertility of women of color and Third World women, ignoring the fact that fertility trends have dropped more rapidly than expected globally,<sup>438</sup> downplaying the massive waste produced by technological and military advances,<sup>439</sup> and inflating fertility by eliminating male agency in pregnancy.<sup>440</sup> And as Patricia Hynes notes, “beneath the abstract, agentless word ‘population’ is the substrate of sexual politics—the crosscutting domain within culture, social relations, history, economy, science and sexuality in which women become pregnant.”<sup>441</sup> The discursive links between fertility, poverty, population growth and shrinking environmental resources were premised on tenuous confluences of factors

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<sup>436</sup> Newland, *Refugees*, 9.

<sup>437</sup> Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*.

<sup>438</sup> Hartmann, “Population, Environment, and Security,” 2.

<sup>439</sup> Joni Seager, “Patrilachal Vandalism: Militaries and the Environment,” in *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development*, ed. Ynestra King and Jael Silliman (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999), 163–88.

<sup>440</sup> Hynes, “Taking Population Out of the Equation: Reformulating I=PAT,” in *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development*, ed. Jael Silliman and Ynestra King (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999), 39–73.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

that failed to “distinguish among symptoms, consequences, proximate causes, and ultimate causes of our global environmental crises.”<sup>442</sup>

The point here is not to suggest that the provision of large scale and abundant fertility and family planning programs is a necessarily negative. After all, these issues are hallmarks issues of feminist social justice movements worldwide. What is troubling is how in these configurations of women’s fertility and state intervention in population control efforts, women’s reproductive needs are not rights on their own merit. Instead they are deployed to advance alarmist discourses of state survival. Claimed to cause all sorts of social malaise such as environmental degradation, war, poverty and crime, women’s potential fertility becomes the legitimate object of state survival. Women’s social justice issues are then increasingly re-scripted within an ever-expanding neoliberal model of development and national sovereignty. And in these merged discourses of environment and population, states’ power over certain ethnic and other non-normative groups and men’s power over women are dissembled in the language of birth spacing, mother and child health, fertility reduction programs, mortality rates and vital stats.

### **3.9 German and Belgian Population Discourses on Rwanda**

It is against the backdrop of the sexual politics of population, environment and refugees that I situate the massive rapes of women during the Rwandan genocide. In regions like Rwanda where women were defined within a colonial vocabulary of indigeneity, their bodies were significant in state politics of peace and security. In this section, I examine the colonial role in the making of the population explosion rhetoric in Rwanda and how that genealogy foreground the refugee crisis. I show how Tutsis women’s sexuality and fertility were prime targets in the state’s politics of indigeneity and security.

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 67.

In its short encounter with formal colonialism, Rwanda fell under German and Belgian colonial powers. Germany's colonial expansion was driven in part by heightened concerns about population explosion within its newly formed nation-state.<sup>443</sup> And in its short time in Ruanda-Urundi, it firmly established the concept of population as a legitimate object of knowledge. It began collecting demographic data and made two important observations.<sup>444</sup> It concluded that Ruanda-Urundi was overpopulated and that the territory was made up of natural ethnic boundaries comprised of the Bantus (Hutus), Pygmies (Twas) and Hamites (Tutsis).<sup>445</sup> German demographers viewed these ethnic groups as racial types and naturalized the Hamitic Hypothesis by declaring the Tutsi as the racially superior descendants of non negroid settlers. The presumed natural territory of the population was designed to match naturalized racial groups that were defined in opposition to each other as invaders and natives. Although the German census data was generally considered scientifically faulty, it did inform Belgian and UN demographers in the coming years.<sup>446</sup>

Like Germany, Belgium's foray into colonialism was also partly fueled by the new nation's worries of population explosion in the tiny country.<sup>447</sup> When they arrived in their colonies, the Belgians approached population studies of both the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi systematically and employed two exaggerated discourses of population: underpopulation in the Congo and overpopulation in Ruanda-Urundi. In the Belgian Congo, the Belgians worried about population shortage, especially in the areas where they needed a large labor force to

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<sup>443</sup> Townsend, *The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire*.

<sup>444</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

<sup>447</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*.

exploit the vast mineral and rubber resources.<sup>448</sup> Troubled by the vastness of the territory and the massive African resistance to their policies, they adopted pronatalist policies throughout the Congo.<sup>449</sup> They established maternal and prenatal care projects throughout the territory and systematically encouraged marriage in the colonial army.<sup>450</sup> Even urban areas or mining towns were guided by pronatalist principles. Unlike many colonial policies that barred native women from migrating to towns,<sup>451</sup> Belgian colonial policy permitted women's settlement in towns within the moral nuclear family configurations so they can procreate under state surveillance.<sup>452</sup> As Nancy Rose Hunt notes "the eugenics modality of Belgian colonial power" focused on the "sexuality, fertility, childbearing, and mothering" of Congolese women, illustrating "the centrality of intimacies and female bodies to imperial violences, fragilities, and chronologies."<sup>453</sup>

Unlike the problem of underpopulation in the Belgian Congo, in Ruanda-Urundi the Belgians saw a different demographic problem—overpopulation. They authorized large-scale population surveys and sought to expand upon Germany's incomplete census attempts and to address several of the latter's flaws.<sup>454</sup> Arguing that the German studies were based on general observations of explorers who did not pay attention to important demographic questions because they were not systematically trained to undertake demographic studies, the Belgians embarked upon a more systematic survey, employing the latest scientific demographic tools and

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<sup>448</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>449</sup> Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*.

<sup>450</sup> Shaw, *Force Publique, Force Unique*.

<sup>451</sup> Jane Barrett, *South African Women on the Move: Between the Lines* (London, UK: Dec Book Distribution, 1986).

<sup>452</sup> Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgian Africa," 451.

<sup>453</sup> Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*, 10.

<sup>454</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*.

approaches.<sup>455</sup> They also set out to determine the actual size of Ruanda-Urundi's population, which they thought the Germans had overestimated by discounting the population's uneven distribution in the territory and focusing only on inhabited regions where their missions were concentrated.<sup>456</sup> Consequently the Belgians argued that the German census had overlooked significant variables such as famines and livestock epidemics, which tend to reduce food supply and populations.<sup>457</sup> Despite their many criticisms of the German findings, however, the Belgians shared some basic tenets with the Germans. One was that Ruanda-Urundi was indeed overpopulated and another was that its population was composed of Hamitic Tutsis and indigenous Bantus and Twas. Even from under a cloud of suspicion, these two insights from the German studies remained a foundational part of demographic canon on the region.

While the Germans had laid the ideological underpinning of demographic discourses, the Belgians codified these discourses in their institutions on an unforeseen scale. They commissioned massive demographic studies. The first couple took place in 1922-1927 and in 1933.<sup>458</sup> The first study would later be declared weak by UN demographers on the grounds that it lacked "objectivity in the definition of an adult male" and "failure of some men to register."<sup>459</sup> But the 1933 study would turn out to be an authoritative document that linked population, race and gender into colonial administration. The UN would also draw on it extensively several years

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>459</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*, 12.

later for its own demographic assessment of Ruanda-Urundi.<sup>460</sup> The 1933 census designated able-bodied males as the heads of households and estimated the population size based on the number of such households, thereby coding the territory as a naturally patriarchal social order. Furthermore, it was instrumental in naturalizing and codifying a racially defined indigeneity in Rwanda, assigning everyone ethnic identity cards. These identity cards institutionalized the Hamitic Hypothesis by declaring that the Twa were the original people, the Hutu were an old indigenous group and the Tutsi were Hamitic descendents who presumably entered the region in more recent times.<sup>461</sup>

For Belgian demographers, this racial information mattered because it would “ascertain whether or not a favorable demographic balance ... of a group or of the country is being maintained, to seek out the causes of any situation where the balance is adverse and to find ways and means to correct it.”<sup>462</sup> The 1933 census informed a 1943 ordinance that governed the movement of peoples within the territory.<sup>463</sup> The ordinance prescribed:

[N]o indigenous inhabitant shall be authorized to leave the chiefdom to which he belongs for a period of more than thirty days on end unless he obtains a transfer passport (*passport de mutation*) from the chief or his representative. The passport is also required if an indigenous inhabitant leaves his place of residence to stay for a similar period of thirty days on end in part of his chiefdom in which non-indigenous inhabitants enjoy private rights.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> *Belgium, Rapport soumis par le Gouvernement Belge a'Assemblee Generale des Nations Unies au Sujet d'Administration du Ruanda-Urundi Pendant l'Annee 1947 (1948)*, (Quoted in United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division. “The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi,” p. 158).

<sup>463</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division. “The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi,” p.34

<sup>464</sup> *Belgium, Rapport soumis par le Gouvernement Belge a'Assemblee Generale des Nations Unies au Sujet d'Administration du Ruanda-Urundi Pendant l'Annee 1947 (1948)*, p. 9 (Quoted in United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division. “The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi,” 34)



In the coming decades, Belgium continued to collect census data on the region. And its historical rendition of the population as a settlement of Hamites and Bantus was echoed by the UN's 1953 demographic report on Ruanda-Urundi. While pointing out some methodological errors in the Belgian census of 1933, the UN report directly imported two observations about overpopulation and indigeneity. It proclaimed that Ruanda-Urundi was "outstanding from the demographic point of view, as an area of dense population. In fact, this remote territory, situated in the heart of Africa, is one of the most densely populated countries on that continent."<sup>465</sup> To further bolster its proclamation, the UN report referenced another 1950 Belgian report that had declared Ruanda-Urundi a poor country plagued by "famine and shortage" whose "too dense and ever-increasing population has to live on very rugged land, which erosion, either agricultural or geological, is impoverishing year by year," and that "[t]hese basic facts are a condition of Ruanda-Urundi's whole economy and cannot be too frequently recalled."<sup>466</sup>

The UN also imported the Hamitic Hypothesis from the various Belgian studies and reported that "[a]nother important demographic characteristic of Ruanda-Urundi is the ethnic composition of its population."<sup>467</sup> While the UN noted that all the ethnic composition in Ruanda-Urundi was "indigenous," it also proclaimed that the territory was made up of "two independent Hamite kingdoms" that migrated into the area.<sup>468</sup> The report also claimed, "the Batutsi are obviously of Hamitic origin and compared with the other Hamites of East Africa have retained

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<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>466</sup> *Belgium, Rapport soumis par le Gouvernement Belge a'Assemblee Generale des Nations Unies au Sujet d'Administration du Ruanda-Urundi Pendant l'Annee 1950*, 89 (Translation Quoted in United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division. "The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi," 1)

<sup>467</sup> United Nations Department of Social Affairs, Population Division, *The Population Of Ruanda-Urundi*, 1.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., 2.

their racial purity to a remarkable degree.”<sup>469</sup> However, it did admit that exact locations from which these presumed Hamitic people hailed was not clear, contending,

The arrival of the Batutsis in that part of Africa is a fact recorded by history or, more correctly, by oral tradition, which is mainly concerned with the dynasties of the chiefs in East Africa and in which fiction is mixed with fact. The coming of the Batutsi to Ruanda-Urundi may have been an episode in the great migration of East African history; be that as it may, there is no agreement concerning either the date of the arrival of the Hamites or their migration routes. A fairly widespread theory is that they came from the northeast in the twelfth century and entered the edge of what is now the Uganda Protectorate...”<sup>470</sup>

However, the study still offered a portrait of the Tutsi as a culturally rootless enigma who upon arrival “enslaved the Bantus.”<sup>471</sup> And while the UN could identify no actual location that confirmed Tutsi origin, it located the real evidence of their migration and racial distinctiveness literally on their bodies, claiming that their height was the most striking “contrast between the Bahutu and the Batutsi.”<sup>472</sup>

In contrast to the rootless Tutsi, the Batwa were said to be the oldest inhabitants who did not have an “origin.” Bahutu indigeneity was also interestingly framed. They too presumably came from somewhere and “came to the country later.”<sup>473</sup> But there was no further theory about their origin or their arrival timeline; not was there an extensive effort to historicize their migration. They simply came long ago and were a “more or less passive people.”<sup>474</sup> As such,

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<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

their historicity was unremarkable and not worth stitching together. And although the Bahutu were immigrants, most importantly, they were not framed as conquerors.

While the UN study accepted the Belgian depiction of indigeneity and its relevance to population studies in the Belgian census, it admonished the Belgians for their handling of fertility, which the UN viewed as one of the key “elements of population growth” (mortality and migration were the other key elements). The UN highlighted the limitation of the Belgian study as well as many other colonial studies of population in Africa in general writing:

Data on fertility have been obtained from time to time in many African territories by asking certain groups of African women how many children they had had. Only one survey of this kind has been made in Ruanda-Urundi; it involved about fifty women and the results were published in the official reports for 1926 and 1927. The data obtained were of very limited value, in view of the small number of women interrogated.<sup>475</sup>

Population planning, crisis aversion or population stabilization could not be well understood without the full investigation of and intervention in women’s fertility and the study further argued:

In the circumstances, it is essential to be fully and accurately informed on fertility, mortality, migration and the trends of population growth and distribution. This will be possible only if the collection and analysis of demographic statistics is recognized as the full-time job of specially trained technicians, and not merely a part of the responsibility of administrative officials.<sup>476</sup>

The UN called for the professionalization of surveillance of women’s reproductive activities, revealing that central role women’s fertility played in the entire population project.

The UN study corrected the Belgian oversight on the fertility variable and concluded that Ruanda-Urundi’s “present level of fertility is high and, if it declines at all within the next fifteen

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 27.

to twenty years, it is unlikely to do so as rapidly as mortality.”<sup>477</sup> The UN was especially troubled by the role of Catholic Church in obstructing the fertility reduction aspect of population control. The Church exerted great influence in Ruanda-Urundi, especially over the education system, the most viable tool for mass sensitization of the population to decrease family size.<sup>478</sup> It, therefore, hampered the state’s efforts to control the fertility of women. The church continued to be a target of the UN demographic campaign for years to come.

For the UN, fertility remained at the top of the population control agenda. Even though it also viewed migration as an important pillar of the population equation and considered mass migration as a solution to Ruanda-Urundi’s population congestion, it concluded that fertility control was ultimately the most viable option. According to the study, although the shifting of the population movement into its neighboring regions “may eventually be desirable,” it was “unlikely” because “emigration would have to occur on a large and continuous scale and would probably require government assistance.”<sup>479</sup> While the report considered large-scale orchestration of migration “a possible means of alleviating the pressure of population in Ruanda-Urundi,”<sup>480</sup> in the end it deemed it too big a drain on governments, which in turn could destabilize the population. This discourse of mass dislocation ominously foreshadowed what was to become the biggest political crisis in post-independence Rwanda—the refugee crisis. The mass exodus of refugees in 1959 would resuscitate this formerly foreclosed option, which would end horrifically in the 1994 genocide. For the time being, however, the consensus was that

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

emigration “would have little if any effect in reducing the burdensome ratio of children to adults among the population in Ruanda-Urundi.”<sup>481</sup>

While Ruanda-Urundi’s demographers singled out women’s fertility as the cause of overpopulation and land shortage, what they viewed as a solution in fact had a much more direct consequence on land shortage. Colonialists had introduced and systematized Arabica coffee, tea, tobacco and pyrethrum in the region, claiming and clearing large tracks of land for the development of large cash crop estates.<sup>482</sup> Although colonial and UN demographers saw this kind of agricultural policy as the remedy for the famines that frequently plagued Rwanda, the mono-cropping and land enclosures were in fact perpetuating the myth of overpopulation. Instead of the structural sources of land shortage, colonial demographers saw women’s fertility as the source of environmental and economic problems. Coffee production and export would continue to be significant in Rwanda’s post-independence economy. As we will see later, this non-diversified, cash-crop driven development policy would play a critical role in Rwanda’s political crisis in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **3.10 Post-independence Politics of Population in Rwanda**

Rwanda’s overpopulation was repeatedly told and the country continued to be included in Africa’s “fertility belts” throughout the 1950s and 60s. By the late 1980s, the UN declared, “The ‘Land of a Thousand Hills’ is running out of space.”<sup>483</sup> Along with other agencies such as the World Bank, the UN poured a great deal of resources into Rwanda and by the mid-1980s, these efforts began paying off with Rwandan leaders firmly on board. In 1987, UNFPA proudly

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> *Country Assessment Report: A Report Prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Under the Auspices of the AU/NEPAD*, 11.

<sup>483</sup> O’Haire, “Rwanda: The ‘Land of a Thousand Hills’ Is Running Out of Space,” 3.

announced that “[i]n traditional, religious Rwanda, where children are cherished and large families are the norm, family planning was a taboo subject as recently as 1980. ...Today, not only is it discussed openly, but Rwanda has adopted one of the strongest family planning policies in Africa”<sup>484</sup> This change was a result of then President Juvénal Habyarimana’s decision that population explosion was one of “his country’s pressing problems.”<sup>485</sup> With the financial and technical assistance of the UNFPA, Rwanda was poised to tackle this pressing problem. Unsurprisingly, fertility was at the top of the agenda. Indeed Rwanda’s “decisive action” included an ambitious goal to reduce “average completed family size from 8.6 to 6.5,” with an ultimate desire for “a population held to 9.3 million by the turn of the century.”<sup>486</sup> Three or four children were declared optimal. The government also began mobilizing churches and encouraging couples to practice birth spacing and smaller family sizes.<sup>487</sup>

And as was increasingly the case throughout Africa, Rwanda’s population control policy was framed as a women’s issue. President Habyarimana appointed a woman, Gaudence Habimana Nyirasafari, to direct Rwanda’s National Office of Population. UNFPA saw Nyirasafari as perhaps the single most important player in changing Rwandan fertility attitudes and hailed her “professionalism.” Under her leadership, Rwanda introduced a slew of women’s programs including women’s health centers, expanded family services, maternal and child healthcare, sex education in schools, the reintegration of pregnant teens back to school and the making education through eleventh grade compulsory for girls.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

But as was the case with other African countries, political appointments and women's issues were paradoxical, often used to advance the agenda of ruling parties.<sup>489</sup> Too often, powerful first ladies and women married to powerful military and political men orchestrated women's projects as a way for the political parties to access new sources of western funding women's issues in Africa.<sup>490</sup> States handpicked pliable women to serve as what one author called "window dressing"<sup>491</sup> for western donors and to comply with party lines. The appointees helped to keep women's issues and the important funds to which they were attached under state control. And western organizations, including those working on population control, were biting the bait. Indeed, as UNFPA intensified its efforts in Africa, it reached out to powerful women. In 1984, it hosted a conference for First Ladies, senior women ministers, and powerful women leaders including "population experts and representatives of African national women's organizations."<sup>492</sup>

The involvement of powerful government women in African population activities was far from a feminist project, however. These women were close collaborators of parties that were embroiled in ethnic politics and that had in fact stifled the rise of an independent women's movement.<sup>493</sup> Rwanda's women's political offices during Habyarimana's rule had an especial notorious ethnic, anti-democratic and anti-feminist history. For example, The Ministry for

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<sup>488</sup> "Rwanda: The 'Land of a Thousand Hills' is Running Out of Space," 3.

<sup>489</sup> Amina Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy: State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria," *Africa Development* XX, no. 1 (1995): 37–58.

<sup>490</sup> André Guichaoua, *Rwanda 1994. Les politiques du génocide à Butare* (KARTHALA Editions, 2005).

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> "UNFPA Hosts Forum for Women Leaders," *Population: UNFPA Newsletter*, May 1984, 1.

<sup>493</sup> Guichaoua, *Rwanda 1994. Les politiques du génocide à Butare*.

Family and Women Affairs was headed by some of the worst genocide advocates including Leon Mugesera, a man and a former academic turned Hutu power propagandist.<sup>494</sup> And Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, another Minister of Family and Women Affairs, was the first woman charged and convicted by the ICTR for conspiracy to commit genocide and crimes against humanity including rape.<sup>495</sup>

Nyiramasuhuko's political ascent, too, was directly related to her loyalty to President and especially to the first lady, who single-handedly accelerated or blocked the rise of the few Rwandan women in power based on ethnic politics.<sup>496</sup> Certainly, in Rwanda, the biography of the lead figure in population control underscores how an extremist government deployed an extremist woman to play the role of women's rights advocate. Nyiramasuhuko was a childhood schoolmate of the President's and a high-ranking member of the ruling party since the early years of the President's reign and was one of the three most prominent women in Rwandan politics, alongside the first lady and Pauline Nyiramasuhuko. She was a part of the President's enigmatic northern Hutu-dominated, inner circle that masterminded the 1994 genocide, and was often in attendance at key restructuring meetings that directed the party toward its extremist positions.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 61.

<sup>495</sup> "The Prosecutor v. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, Arsène Shalom Ntahobali, Sylvain Nsabimana, Alphonse Nteziryayo, Joseph Kanyabahi, Élie Ndayambaje," Case No. ICTR-98-42-T, Summary of Judgment and Sentence, <http://www.unict.org/tabid/155/Default.aspx?ID=1215> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>496</sup> Nyiramasuhuko's appointment to the ministry was reportedly met with incredulosity by those who had neither heard of her nor felt she had any qualifications. Another prominent women's leader, Julienne Mukabarungi, was shut out of the first lady's inner circles during the reconfiguration of MNRD because she was half Tutsi and half Hutu. In André Guichaoua, 2005. *Rwanda 1994: Les Politiques du Génocide à Butare*, 59.

<sup>497</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal For Rwanda, "THE PROSECUTOR OF THE TRIBUNAL v. FRANÇOIS KARERA" Case No.: ICTR-01-74-T, MAY 15, 2006, pp. 48 and 51



### 3.11 Population Explosion and the Refugee Question

With extensive assistance from international organizations, by the late 1980s, Rwanda was fully immersed in efforts to curtail its population. In fact, the narrative of a Rwanda tearing at the seams under the population pressure was becoming an important smokescreen to avoid Habyarimana's other real pressing problem—the Rwandan Tutsi refugees. The crisis, which began with the country's birth in 1959, led to a mass exodus of Tutsis to neighboring countries. By 1962, as a result of the deposition of the Tutsi rulers and the hostile political environment that ensued the refugee number climbed to 120,000.<sup>498</sup> When Rwanda Tutsi refugees living in Burundi attempted a failed armed return to Rwanda that year, approximately 10,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were killed in Rwanda and several thousand Tutsis fled the country, raising the refugee number to 336,000.<sup>499</sup> By the 1970s, Grégoire Kayibanda, the Republic's first president from central Rwanda, was losing his initial popularity and was increasingly challenged by northern Hutu rivals.<sup>500</sup> With the independence euphoria fading and historically Tutsi intolerant rivals questioning his patriotism, Kayibanda turned to an aggressive campaign against Tutsis in Rwanda, which led to another round of Tutsi exit. Kayibanda then cited the large numbers of exiles "to prove that Rwanda could not accommodate all the candidates for repatriation."<sup>501</sup> The country was overpopulated as it was.

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[http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftrim.unictr.org%2Fwebdrawer%2Frec%2F80113%2Fview%2F&ei=hTsyUt6dG5TD4AO5pIGYDQ&usq=AfQjCNHzXJKJk4SKgts9VGPoTmB3\\_ml7Lg&bvm=bv.52164340.d.dmg](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftrim.unictr.org%2Fwebdrawer%2Frec%2F80113%2Fview%2F&ei=hTsyUt6dG5TD4AO5pIGYDQ&usq=AfQjCNHzXJKJk4SKgts9VGPoTmB3_ml7Lg&bvm=bv.52164340.d.dmg) (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>498</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 61.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

In 1973, President Kayibanda was overthrown in a coup led by then General Habyarimana. While during his early years President Habyarimana did make some earnest effort to address the country's internal ethnic crisis through a series of reconciliatory reforms,<sup>502</sup> his rule did not reduce the number of refugees. Despite promising domestic ethnic reconciliation efforts, Habyarimana, too, resorted to Kayibanda's tactic and stalled all efforts of repatriation.<sup>503</sup> Influenced in large part by Hutu hardliners inside his party, including his wife's powerful relatives who exerted great influence over his northern base, Habyarimana grew increasingly hostile to the idea of a refugee return. By the 1980s, the number of Tutsi refugees scattered in DRC, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania and Kenya exceeded 600,000.<sup>504</sup>

Life for Tutsi refugees was increasingly precarious as the entire Great Lakes region was engulfed by the politics of indigeneity. In the former Zaire, President Mobutu frequently shifted his stance on the citizenship of even Congolese Tutsi whose Rwandan ancestry dated to the pre-colonial era.<sup>505</sup> Anti-Tutsi politics in Uganda was also intensifying. In 1982, Uganda's President Obote launched a campaign to expel Tutsi refugees and, like his neighbor Mobutu, even attacked those who had lived there since the pre-colonial era.<sup>506</sup> While his army pushed thousands of refugees toward Rwanda, the Rwandan government sealed its borders, repelling the refugees back into Uganda.<sup>507</sup> Talks to resolve the crisis were often stalled and the Rwandan government

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<sup>502</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>503</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>505</sup> Mamdani, "Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities."

<sup>506</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*; Winter, "Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda."

<sup>507</sup> Winter, "Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda."

refused the refugees entry, claiming overpopulation.<sup>508</sup> The Rwandan government's move was especially ironic because Rwanda had long hosted Hutu refugees from Burundi, many of whom had been admitted into the country despite its often-cited overpopulation problem. According to UNHCR, in 1994 Rwanda, along with Tanzania, was hosting over a half a million Burundians.<sup>509</sup>

With Uganda's Obote demonizing Tutsis as the accomplices of his former enemy, President Idi Amin, and the Rwandan government closing its borders, the refugees began intense political mobilization. Having lived in exile in neighboring countries for close to three decades, the refugees began making more and more demands for repatriation. Faced with international and refugee pressure, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments set up a commission to confront the refugee crisis but provided no viable solutions.<sup>510</sup> After helping oust Obote by fighting along side then rebel leader and future Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni's resistance army in the 1980s, Tutsi refugees found themselves in a precarious position once more when Uganda's political pendulum of indigeneity swung against them again. After President Museveni seized power, he quickly faced hostile ethnic rivals who called challenged his indigeneity by raising questions his descent from the Bahima ethnic people, a Ugandan pastoralist group associated with the Tutsis and the Hamitic myth.<sup>511</sup> Museveni's formerly fruitful alliance with the Rwandan refugees turned into a political liability forcing him renege on his promise of naturalization to the refugees.

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<sup>508</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 42.

<sup>509</sup> *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Addendum to the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (New York: United Nations, 1994), 19.

<sup>510</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Winter, "Refugees in Uganda and Rwanda."

<sup>511</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 65.

With the prospects for Ugandan citizenship dwindling, the refugees opted for a forced return back to their ancestral land.<sup>512</sup> With Museveni's tacit support, the former fighters regrouped as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a surprise attack on Rwanda in 1991 with the goal of returning the refugees back to Rwanda. Faced with a highly skilled and formidable military foe, the Rwandan government was forced into a series of negotiations with the RPF known as the Arusha Accords sponsored by the US, Organization for African Union (OAU) and the United Nations.<sup>513</sup> Between 1991 and 1994, the Rwandan government and the RPF debated the terms of ceasefire, power sharing, military reconstitution and refugee repatriation. Along with the question of what percentage of the new Army would be made up of RPF members, the demand for refugee return remained one of the two most intractable issues, reigniting the population explosion narrative. As a UNHCR report notes, "the RPF claimed the right for refugees to return to Rwanda, which the government had refused citing overpopulation as the cause."<sup>514</sup>

In shaping its vision of an indigenous population, the Rwandan government framed the refugee crisis within a narrative of overpopulation and amplified its rhetoric of refugees as threats to national security. After the RPF attack in 1991, President Habyarimana established an Enemy Commission, which included "the extremist Tutsi within the country and abroad who are nostalgic for power and who have NEVER acknowledged and STILL DO NOT acknowledge the realities of the Social Revolution of 1959, and who wish to regain power in RWANDA by all possible means, including the use of weapons [emphasis in original]" in its definition of

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<sup>512</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

<sup>513</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*; Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

<sup>514</sup> *Country Assessment Report: A Report Prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Under the Auspices of the AU/NEPAD*, 15.

“primary enemy.”<sup>515</sup> The Commission not only defined refugees as enemies but it also effectively declared them all feudal lords. Its definition of “Enemy supporters” also included “all who lend support to the primary enemy,” such as “Tutsi refugees,” “Tutsi inside the country,” “Unemployed people inside and outside the country,” “the Nilo-Hamitic people of the region.”<sup>516</sup> The document was filled with linguistic slippages between the words “Tutsi” “refugees” and “enemy,” which, as ICTR judges observed, presumed the Tutsi to be a “unified behind the single ideology of Tutsi hegemony.”<sup>517</sup> The government used the refugees as a way to frame the internal Hutu majority as the indigenous population.

The making of the refugee as enemy also had a decidedly sexual dimension and explicitly centered Tutsis women refugees in the national threat discourses. The commission warned, for instance, that “Foreigners married to Tutsi wives” are legitimate suspects of state espionage.<sup>518</sup> And army leaders cautioned battalion soldiers about Tutsi women. As one Tutsi witness who was a member of the Rwandan Para Commando Battalion testified before the ICTR, during weekly mandatory meetings, battalion leaders warned the men “to avoid enemy traps, such as money used by the “enemy” and marrying Tutsi women.”<sup>519</sup> This old colonial idea of Tutsis women as

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<sup>515</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*. Also see International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “THE PROSECUTOR v. Théoneste BAGOSORA, Gratien KABILIGI, Aloys NTABAKUZE Anatole NSENGIYUMVA,” Case No. ICTR-98-41-T, Summary of Judgment and Sentence, p. 53 <http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Bagosora/Judgement/081218.pdf> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “THE PROSECUTOR v. Théoneste BAGOSORA Gratien KABILIGI Aloys NTABAKUZE Anatole NSENGIYUMVA,” Case No. ICTR-98-41-T, Summary of Judgment and Sentence, 53. <http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Bagosora/Judgement/081218.pdf> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>518</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

<sup>519</sup> International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. “THE PROSECUTOR v. Théoneste BAGOSORA Gratien KABILIGI Aloys NTABAKUZE Anatole NSENGIYUMVA,” Case No. ICTR-98-41-T,

inherent enemies of the state was also revived in Hutu manifestos that circulated widely at the time of independence and around the 1994 genocide.

The presumption of the gender and race disorder sure to follow the Tutsi refugee influx also allowed the government to define Hutu nationalism as a masculinist project. By 1993, the government honed its Hutu propaganda on masculinity. It recruited, armed and trained young unemployed Hutu men into various youth militias such as the *Interahamwe*, which became backbone of the genocide and the massive rapes in it.<sup>520</sup> It also imported machetes, which by Human Rights estimates were “enough to arm every third adult Hutu male.”<sup>521</sup> The political crisis was framed as a crisis of masculinity, especially as the opening up of old colonial wounds to Hutu masculinity. Through the conflict, the young were hypermasculinized..

For the government, a militarized RPF was legible since men fought other men. But the non-militarized, feminized refugee women posed an unknowable and deceptive threat. The young recruits, many of whom were just entering their sexual age, needed to take special caution not to fall for the guile of Tutsi women’s sexuality since the latter was always deployed in the service of her race. Thus, unrestrained sexuality on the part of the young men could put the purity of the family at risk. While in real life people did not live according to such rigid codes of sexuality, the state had often analogized its political problems within the trope of purity, masculinity and family duty. The early Hutu power manifestos, the precursor to the definition of the enemy and various reincarnations of the manifestos in the 1990s, were rife with language of the patriarchal family as the natural order of nationhood. The family was under assault and it was

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Summary of Judgment and Sentence, 55.

<http://www.unictt.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Bagosora/Judgement/081218.pdf> (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>520</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 9.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

the duty of the young men to protect their women. The crisis was then a type of sexual rite of passage to masculinity for young men, calling on them to rise up to manhood and defend their nation.

The increasing alarm over overpopulation needs to be read alongside the imagination of refugees as threats to indigeneity and masculinity, because when considered together, they reveal the significance of sexual politics in the region's racial politics and help explain why sexual violence featured so prominently in the genocide. Historically, to be a Tutsi had denoted a state of unrooted circulation. Within the era of post-independence politics of nationhood in the great lakes region, it continued to represent a permanent state of refugeeness. Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, one of the notorious architects of the genocide, captured this sentiment when he proclaimed that the Tutsis "never had a country of their own to allow them to become a people; they are and will remain naturalised Nilotic immigrants."<sup>522</sup> As a people without a country, they threaten "infiltration" like *Inyenzi*, the notorious Kinyarwanda moniker given to Tutsis refugees meaning cockroach. Not only did the term refer to "those who come out at night"<sup>523</sup> but those whose ability to multiply makes it hard to eliminate. As the genocide-advocating magazine, *Kangura*, put it in one of its articles 1993 issue,

[A] cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach...The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed. The malice, the evil are just as we knew them in the history of our country. We are not wrong in saying that a cockroach gives birth to another cockroach. Who could tell the difference between the *Inyenzi* who attacked in October 1990 and those of the 1960s.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>523</sup> Jolyon P. Mitchell, *Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence: The Role of Religion and Media* (Routledge, 2012), 88.

<sup>524</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 24.

The theme of overly fertile, female insects that threaten to overtake the land, and the call to arms to wage war on Tutsi women, would come up again during the genocide. Alphonse Nteziryayo, a lieutenant colonel in the armed forces who at the time of the genocide was the mayor of Butare, referred to Tutsis at commune meetings as “‘lice,’ whose ‘eggs’ needed to be destroyed.”<sup>525</sup> He also directed people of his commune “to abduct and kill Tutsi women married to Hutus, and to flush out Tutsi children and kill them.”<sup>526</sup> The ICTR convicted him of the use of rape for genocide in 2011.<sup>527</sup> That the cockroach language developed in the context of a potential refugee return vis-à-vis the RPF attack is not insignificant. It was an important metaphor for the fear of overpopulation and the wrong population composition.

### **3.12 Framing the Genocide as Overpopulation**

In the wake of the genocide, the rhetoric of overpopulation and conflict has continued unabated. It is often offered by environmentalists, refugee support groups, journalists and scholars and to explain the genocide. In 1996, journalist Robert Kaplan specifically targeted women in his analysis of the Rwandan genocide, noting:

Rwanda is a place where women have been giving birth on the average of eight times over their adult lifetime. This has been going on for decades. If those women had been giving birth two or three times instead of eight, imagine how much different Rwandan society would have been. And given that politics is merely a macro expression of social relations, the politics would have evolved differently.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> *Prosecutor v. Nyiramasuhuko et al.*, Case No. ICTR-98-42-T, p. 10.

[http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Nyira/judgement/110624\\_summary.pdf](http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Nyira/judgement/110624_summary.pdf) (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> *Prosecutor v. Nyiramasuhuko et al.*, Case No. ICTR-98-42-T,

[http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Nyira/judgement/110624\\_summary.pdf](http://www.unict.org/Portals/0/Case/English/Nyira/judgement/110624_summary.pdf) (accessed May 26, 2014).



In 2008, a joint UNHCR and African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) country assessment of Rwanda similarly declared that the country had one of the highest population densities in Africa.<sup>529</sup> It also continued to perpetuate the same colonial narrative of indigeneity claiming that “[be]ginning in the 1300s, waves of Tutsi migrated from the north into what is now Rwanda. The region was originally inhabited by Hutu and Twa peoples.”<sup>530</sup> Once again, there was no account given of where these Tutsi came from. Much like the Tutsis refugees of the twentieth century, Tutsi ancestry also appears originless, rootless, and lawless.

That overpopulation causes state insecurity was endorsed even by some of the most knowledgeable scholars on the region. For instance, Gerard Prunier, whose work on the genocide is generally regarded as authoritative declared:

As for the mechanics of the genocide, we have already described them: unquestioning obedience to authority, fear of Tutsi devils and the hope of grabbing something for oneself in the general confusion. There is of course one further added cause: overpopulation. This is still a taboo, because human beings are not supposed to be rats in a laboratory cage and Christians, Marxists, Islamic fundamentalists and World Bank experts will all tell you that overpopulation is relative and that God (or modern technology or the Shari'a) will provide. But let whoever has not at least once felt murderous in a crowded subways at rush-hour throw the first stone.<sup>531</sup>

Prunier pointed to two “experts” to buttress his claim—a geographer and a US woman from the Vice President's office who made the case that overpopulation was a factor in the Rwandan

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<sup>528</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” US Public Broadcasting System, April 5, 1996 quoted in *Dangerous Intersections*, 12.

<sup>529</sup> *Country Assessment Report: A Report Prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Under the Auspices of the AU/NEPAD*.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>531</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 353.

genocide and heeded the world better pay attention. He put his faith in the authority of these two voices on two peculiar “facts:” “Whatever else they may know, geographers know about land and women know about wombs. Both are to do with nature, which they know cannot be pushed beyond a certain point without kicking back.”<sup>532</sup> In his logic, women are connected to nature because they presumably possess wombs, while geographers are experts on nature because they think about land. And American women’s wombs give universal insight into all wombs. Prunier’s formulation of Rwanda’s population problem recreated the oldest enlightenment epistemological duos of patriarchy: nature/femininity and rationality/masculinity.<sup>533</sup>

If, as Prunier claims, geographers know land and women know wombs, then economists surely know environmental economics and leading economists have registered doubts about the link between overpopulation and the Rwandan genocide. For instance, economist Leonce Ndikumana argues that despite pressure on the land, “population growth is only a scapegoat for people willing to put the blame of failed development policies on rural populations.”<sup>534</sup> Ndikumana points out that the population alarmist versions of the Rwandan genocide neglect the critical role of the “nepotistic and dictatorial political systems that reward ethnic identity rather than merit, while miserably failing to protect the rights and interests of the individual and minority groups.”<sup>535</sup> And often the government pursued its failed development policies with the full

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<sup>532</sup> Prunier, *Africa’s World War*, 353.

<sup>533</sup> Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: South End Press, 2010); Alison M. Jaggar, *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

<sup>534</sup> Leonce Ndikumana, “Institutional Constraints and the Population-Resources Dilemma in Burundi and Rwanda. Working Paper” (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Economics Department, 1997), 21.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*

support and even pressure of the World Bank and other multilateral funding agencies. In fact, the Rwandan refugee crisis reached its boiling point following the collapse of global coffee prices in the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>536</sup>

Under the tutelage of the World Bank and other donors, Rwanda has turned to coffee and tea, accounting for seventy percent of its current exports.<sup>537</sup> The crash of its biggest cash crop in the 1980s had strained the government, which blamed the failure of its development policies on refugee invaders and overly fertile women. The World Bank was also making similar declarations in other parts of Africa. As Meredith Trushen shows, in neighboring Tanzania the World Bank continued to erase the colonial genealogy of unsustainable economic and environmental policies and blamed fertility for the environmental damage there.<sup>538</sup> German and British colonial policies such as taxation on crops that disregarded the natural cycles of harvesting and seasonal labor contracts had in fact destroyed Tanzania's old modes of managing agricultural productivity and led to mass migration of farmers in search of work.<sup>539</sup> However, the World Bank and the Tanzanian government declared overpopulation and "economic backwardness" as the primary causes of environmental decline.<sup>540</sup> Throughout the region the structural inheritance of colonialism was reframed in ways that exacted violence on women's African women's bodies.

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<sup>536</sup> *Country Assessment Report: A Report Prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Under the Auspices of the AU/NEPAD*, 11.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>538</sup> Meredith Trushen, "The Ecological Crisis in Tanzania," in *Dangerous Intersections: Feminist Perspectives on Population, Environment, and Development*, ed. Jael Silliman and Ynestra King, First Ed. edition (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999), 89–107.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

The chapter illuminates how the emergence of Tutsi women as a crisis point for the state arose at the intersection of colonialism, nationalism and patriarchy. The Rwandan Tutsi refugees were an embodiment of the link between population explosion, environmental decline and national security. As a form of bare life, Tutsi women refugees were especially threatening, representing rootlessness and disorder. While as refugees Tutsi women were a new technology of biopower, their signification as a crisis to the state has to be understood alongside a prior colonial technology of biopower—the population. Scripted within an old racial grammar, the Rwandan refugees were in full conversation with the older technology population control that anchored the state’s claims and stakes of indigeneity. As threats to the rightful indigenous “composition” of the Rwandan population, Tutsi women’s sexuality and fertility was of great concern for the new state. The collision of population and refugee discourses in the pre-genocide years in Rwanda helped to increase the signification of Tutsi women’s sexuality and laid the groundwork for the mass sexual violation directed at them during the 1994 genocide. The juxtaposition of population and refugee discourses in this chapter brings to light that the genealogy of the refugee goes back to population discourses and thereby uncovers a hidden element of the sexual politics of the state. The refugee discourse emerges as a site where the politics of sexual violence against Tutsi women was discursively cultivated. Consequently, the chapter shows that theories that view patriarchy as the primary source of gender-based violence in conflict zones do not reveal the complexity of factors that prime women for violence.

# CHAPTER 4

## AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE COLONIAL, THE NATIONAL AND THE TRANSNATIONAL: RWANDAN FEMINIST NARRATIVES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN GENOCIDE

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how leading Rwandan anti-gender-based violence (GBV) activists account for the relationship between colonial violence and gender-based violence during the Rwandan genocide. Based on interviews with twenty-two leaders, I assess whether or not theorizing about the causes of GBV captured historical and racial factors if they began in non-western locations steeped in colonial histories. The research question pursued here is hence, what do Rwandan anti-GBV activists view the role of colonial histories to be in the making of GBV during the genocide of 1994?

My study finds that my informants do implicate colonialism in setting up the dynamics for the mass rape of Tutsi women during the 1994 genocide, especially highlighting the Hamitic Hypothesis as an erotic signifier and noting a colonial link between ethnic-based citizenship and GBV. They often frame their support for a non-ethnically defined, national unity based citizenship model as a type of conscious political resistance to a colonial inheritance of identity and to GBV. However, their narratives also reveal overlapping theoretical positions and political vision feminist human rights discourse that emphasizes patriarchy and essentializes universal woman as the privilege subject of GBV. The study also reveals that at times, global south feminists such as the Rwandan activists even drive these western views. While the study confirms that colonial histories emerge prominently in the Rwandan leaders' narratives, the

western and global south ideological convergences raises questions about the limitations of genealogical frameworks and demands that can better capture the complexity of transnational feminist political and knowledge production regarding conflict zones.

#### **4.2 Methodological Approach**

In order to answer the questions about Rwandan feminists' understanding of the colonial legacy of gender-based violence but to do so in manner that displaced the imperializing tendencies of traditional ethnographic methods, I drew on a number of decolonizing feminist methodological frameworks. Intellectual ethnography aims to understand knowledge about colonial contexts, centers activist as decolonizing knowledge producers.<sup>541</sup> While this form of ethnographic inquiry begins with activists, it is not intended to make generalizations about the inner working of groups or probe into the activists' personal psyches. Rather, it is concerned with how activist knowledge point to "the possibilities and pitfalls of fostering resistance struggles" across differently situated political endeavors.<sup>542</sup> And by expanding the site of knowledge production, intellectual ethnography challenges the academic/activist split that privileges the former as legitimate knowledge producers.<sup>543</sup>

Similarly feminist standpoint methodology begins inquiry into power relations from the marginal voices of knowledge production.<sup>544</sup> While it views all knowledge as situated knowledge, standpoint theory believes that marginal voices to be more objective and insightful

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<sup>541</sup> Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>544</sup> Sandra Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

about modes of domination.<sup>545</sup> But as Sandra Harding notes, a standpoint is not “an ascribed position with its different perspective that oppressed groups can claim automatically.”<sup>546</sup> Rather, a standpoint “an achievement, something for which oppressed groups must struggle, something that requires both science and politic...”<sup>547</sup>

This project draws on the theorizing of informants whose standpoint arises directly out of social struggle. Avega and Haguruka as well as the independent informants have a distinctive vantage point from which to make sense of the sexual violence. Based on their shared collective struggle and reflection, leaders in these political groups are perhaps the most important theorists on the subject of war and GBV. While my work focuses on members of organizations, my intention is not to expose how their individual stories shaped their outlook. Rather, the goal is to look at these experts as knowledge producers on GBV. The connection between the personal and the political has been one of the most important insights of feminist ethnography. However with survivors including those who have emerged as national leaders, probing the personal is a complicated proposition. This point was underscored for me in another context when I volunteered on a project that required interviewing survivors about what their involvement with Avega has meant for them. I had known some of these women prior to working on the project as spirited and jovial individuals who often spoke about the genocide without prompting and in a composed manner. But during the interview question for the project turned to their personal journey to Avega, their trauma surfaced in palpable ways. Their voices often faded or stared into space or began weeping. These moments made me realize that the way they had talked about the

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<sup>545</sup> Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (October 1, 1988): 575–99.

<sup>546</sup> Harding, “Is There a Feminist Method?” 5.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

genocide when they were doing so voluntarily in fact been general and abstract. They often make remarks like, “Did you know every woman and girl was raped during the genocide?” “Oh yes, they used to say Tutsi came from Ethiopia, you know,” and so. Even though they had often spoken freely about the genocide, I realized that they never told the events of 1994 from their personal experience with the exception of the occasion statement, “I lost all my family.” It became evident that there are different levels of engagement with the genocide by the same person.

Intellectual ethnography paved a way for me to highlight the intellectual production of the leadership of the organization without prying into their traumatic memories. I bypassed typical ethnographic questions about how my subjects came to be interested in the topic or what their relationship is to their work and instead tailored my queries to topics upon which my informants could comment in their professional capacity. Intellectual ethnography’s emphasis on praxis also allowed me to view academic and activist knowledge production on GBV as a dialectical engagement. Instead of framing the academy and the grassroots as separate spheres, intellectual ethnography allowed me to conceive of myself as well as my informants as participants in social justice work. This methodological approach also opened the space for me to envision myself as an invested African feminist in the struggle to end GBV, racism and militarism. It also became a way of critically reflecting on what it means to be Africans and what it means to coercive of African solutions to African problems. There were many moments in the interview process where my informants and I exchanged information about various activists’ efforts we know of within our respective contexts.

I also used feminist deconstructive ethnographic approaches because they create the space for the researcher to have more latitude about the kinds of revelations she/he makes about



the participants and the kinds of questions she/he poses to them.<sup>548</sup> There were many interaction and exchanges that I chose not to reveal in this study. There were just as many lines of questioning that I chose not to pursue during the interviews. But as Kamala Visweswaran points out feminist deconstructive ethnography also “emphasizes how we think we know what we know is neither transparent nor innocent.”<sup>549</sup> Hence, my own impulses as a researcher to “protect” and “reveal” certain information was not without complication. At times my informants challenged my theoretical assumptions or efforts to highlight certain information or sidestep others. Rather than jettison these moments of failure from my research, I engage them here as a way of probing the limits of my frameworks. I discuss the ethnographic failures of this project in my analysis of my findings.

### **4.3 Informant Profile**

Avega-Agahozo was established in 1995 by a group of 50 widows, who saw their duties as widows as unique. What started as a social organization concerned with widow duties such as proper burial of family members and making decisions about the fate of orphans soon transformed into a powerful political force for women’s rights throughout Rwanda. As the membership grew and the survivors reflected on why the genocide happened, the women confirmed the ubiquity of gender-based violence. As Alice notes, sexual violence quickly took center stage in Avega’s political agenda:

The relationship between Avega and GBV is very direct in the sense that during the genocide one of the weapons used to cause slow death and killing to the target women was rape and other forms of sexual abuse. It is out of that question of rape

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<sup>548</sup> Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions Of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

and abuse and slow death why Avega took it as an issue to carry out a stand against GBV.<sup>550</sup>

Gaining a voice became a crucial part of their survival and political consciousness. The organization began encouraging survivors to speak out about rape and other forms of gender based abuses. As the group gained more knowledge and experience, it shifted toward direct advocacy. It produced a landmark study that confirmed the prevalence and types of GBV against Tutsi women.<sup>551</sup> It also launched a testimony campaign and prepared members to testify in the various legal proceedings like the ICTR and local genocide trials. As Natalie notes, Avega's job had turned to "helping survivors know their rights and to fight for new ones like women's rights and children's rights and to have knowledge about violence against women and to talk and then to go to *Gacaca* court<sup>552</sup> and accuse their attackers."<sup>553</sup> Avega also mobilized the global community and alerted the world about the fact that while raped women were dying of AIDS throughout Rwanda, rapists imprisoned at the Hague and living in refugee camps in places like the DRC were receiving world class medical care including free HIV/AIDS treatment. This effort helped secure anti-retroviral drugs to HIV/AIDS stricken survivors.

Through the years, Avega's activism and advocacy has expanded to include services such as rights training and sensitization, psychological counseling, HIV care provision, income generating activities, constitutional and legal reform advocacy as well as ongoing anti-GBV training. While it remains a widows' interest group, it avails many services to the general public.

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<sup>550</sup> Interview with Avega co-founder, Alice, January 24, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> Gacaca is Rwanda's local community justice system that draws on traditional conflict resolution practices to try low-level perpetrators of genocide.

<sup>553</sup> Interview with Haguruka officer, Natalie, December 18 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

It also collaborates with national women's groups on various women's issues including legal reform in areas of gender-based violence. As Angélique, notes,

Avega, like other civil service organizations, played a big role in the efforts to advocate against GBV. With Avega, there was the exception that almost all the members were affected by genocide and GBV so it has been advocacy and speaking out and parliamentary support and getting involved as much as they can. They still continue to do that. For example, there are widows and orphans who would not have gotten their land had it been left to the old tradition and law. But now, out of reform and collective efforts of which Avega has been a pioneer, they now have rights to land, resources, and protection.<sup>554</sup>

Like Avega, Haguruka is an NGO that has been at the forefront of Rwanda's effort to end gender-based violence. An old organization that dates to the pre-genocide era, Haguruka was instrumental in establishing Profemme, the largest umbrella group of women's NGOs in Rwanda, which in 2010 boasted a membership of fifty NGOs. Due to internal strife over ethnic politics during the era leading up to the genocide, Hakuruka was dissolved during the genocide and re-established after the war. Since its reconstitution, it has since emerged as a leading voice of women and children's rights in the country. And as the members like to note, "People know Haguruka." It was a leading voice in the constitutional reform and changes in inheritance laws of property as well as sexual violence, domestic violence, violence against children, polygamy and marital legal reforms. Public legal literacy one of its central missions because it views the pre-genocide era as one where the population was badly informed about its rights, if those rights existed at all. Moreover, the organization views poverty as a crucial in the perpetuation of gender-based violence and focuses the bulk of its activity on reforming property ownership and inheritance for women. It views the denial of land and property is a form of gendered-violence that placing women and children in precarious positions that subjects them to many forms of gendered violence. As an organization with continuity in the pre- and post-genocide era,

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<sup>554</sup> Interview with Avega co-founder, Angélique, February 10, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

Haguruka is an authority on GBV and is crucial site of African feminist knowledge production.

In addition to the leaders of the aforementioned NGOs, one independent researcher and anti-GBV trainer was included in the study. He specializes in indigenous and grassroots solutions to conflict, including solutions to GBV. His unique approach to conflict resolution has attracted communities outside Rwanda including in the DRC and Burundi. Additionally, he advocates for the integration perpetrators narratives in formulating anti-GBV strategizing and works closely with young men perpetrators of GBV. His culturally grounded model of interpreting GBV and his unique view on perpetrator rehabilitation make him an important contributor to this project.

#### **4.4 Reflections on the Interview Process**

Between December 2010 and June 2011, I interviewed a total of twenty-two activists using semi-structured interviews. The questions were broadly clustered around themes that emerged from the theoretical framework and archival research informing this study and were intended to open multiple points of reflection. The themes included how the groups' history with GBV emerged, how they defined GBV in conflict and non-conflict times and what they feel fueled the violence against women during the genocide. I began with general questions that allowed the interviewees to take the lead in determining the factors that lead to GBV, how they define it and, based on their own work in the area, what they feel are some of the most critical issues around GBV in the context of Rwanda. In the beginning of the interviews, I asked broad questions that included both contemporary manifestations of GBV and genocide-related ones. This allowed me to sense the extent to which the informants were willing to engage the events of 1994. Although the interviewees were experts on GBV, I felt it important for them to decide whether or not to remember the conflict as a defining event of GBV in Rwanda. At times the interviewees began with current issues of violence such as domestic violence and violence against the girl child. But

inevitably the interviewees addressed the genocide. This was especially true for Avega informants because the organization's mission as a survivors' group is directly linked to the events of 1994. In their case, questions about GBV at large were immediately situated within the context of the genocide.

While I began with open-ended reflections, I also had used directed questions in order to probe deeper into genealogical questions. In both organizations, lawyers were more likely to begin their assessment of GBV within the contemporary legal frame. In those cases, I followed up with more pointed and directing questions. Most informants also tended to gravitate toward legal and psychological definition of GBV or to speak about their current anti-GBV campaigns. In those moments, I ended up asking explicit questions about the colonial era. Earl Babbie argues that directed questioning runs the risk of seeking information and making observations that only uphold one's "theoretical conclusions."<sup>555</sup> But in order to explore the historical dimension of GBV, directing questions were important. In Babbie's sense, I was indeed introducing a new framework into which the respondents were grounding their knowledge of rape and conflict my questioning strategies approach were to some effect intended to prove my own hypothesis. But given the non-historicity of the interviewing culture to which my informants were accustomed, I found it indispensable in carrying out a genealogical inquiry.

#### **4.5 Colonialism as Site of Ethnicized Gender-Based Violence**

Unlike their western contemporaries, Rwandan leaders accounted for a myriad of causes that contributed to women's violations during the genocide of 1994 including the politics of colonial representations, racialized identity formations and contemporary governance. The interviewees

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<sup>555</sup> Earl R. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 302.

offered direct reflections on the colonial era or articulated contemporary politics in ways that rendered a verdict on the colonial legacies that introduced racialized divisions in Rwandan society. For instance, independent scholar and GBV expert, Jean-Marie, directly challenges the human right influenced models of anti-GBV groups, arguing:

The definitions of GBV in the fliers of the ministry of health and ministry of women take the same definition of other organizations. They say it is the violence by the men and in Rwanda and in Africa, they explain violence emanating from the culture, that is, coming from the African tradition of patriarchy and so on. But in my point of view, I think it is not exact. I am an old man and I have seen in my time, in my childhood my father, men, had much respect for the women. There was also violence, of course. But I think in this time, the violence is caused by the trauma of the organization of values not rooted in the culture.<sup>556</sup>

For him, the destruction of cultural conflict reconciliation practices by the colonial experience is an overlooked factor in the eruptions of GBV during the genocide and in times of peace.

Informants also often made the connection between colonialism, ethnic politics and GBV through an analysis of the Catholic Church. For instance, for Angélique, the Church was as an engine of disseminating Hamiticized identities:

Colonialism was the first beginning of these Hutu/Tutsi stereotypes and it started a long time ago and it grew and grew and grew until the accomplishment of the genocide. Even in churches it was like that. If you go to the Holy Communion, you should be able to mix with everyone and just go to the Holy Communion. But there wasn't a colonialist priest who would say "go mix with people." The colonial stuff was present at church. And the white priests who came with the colonialists worked with the same colonial language. It affected everyone but woman was suffering double. After 1959, however, this division grew even more but it comes long before then.

While Angélique's narrative highlights the ways in racial ideology was systematized in daily life because of the sway of Church doctrine, Jean-Marie identifies the church's role in disrupting traditional cosmologies. He argues, "Our societies are disorganized by the history of colonization

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<sup>556</sup> Interview with independent informant, Jean-Marie, March 5, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

and the organization of Christian churches and the people are very disoriented.” And Haguruka’s Seraphine points to the connection between the Catholic Church and colonial racial ideology when she states:

There was a period when white people were classifying Africa and saying these Tutsi they were Hamite people. They started saying Tutsi are not really African. It became definitely introduced division and conflict between the Rwandan people. It was demonizing also, to show they come from background that was cursed. The colonials did this. The catholic religion served as the vehicle for this ideology. — Seraphine<sup>557</sup>

For many of these informants, the outside cultural norms imported into Rwandan traditional practices such as Christian morality, are deeply connected to the colonial experience. For instance in his quest for a definition and remedy for GBV, Jean-Marie integrates genealogically informed programmatic intervention in the community. His position echoes Franz Fanon who wrote that the violence of colonialism had “tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the system of references of the country’s economy, lifestyle, and modes of dress...”<sup>558</sup> Jean-Marie’s framework resembles Fanon’s affective approach to colonization, filled with vocabulary and stories that emphasize damage to the native’s psyche and the native’s disavowal of the non-colonial culture, epistemology, and political institutions. For instance, Jean-Marie notes that when he tries to rehabilitate GBV perpetrators, especially young people, he finds that the men have no idea of pre-colonial Rwandan kinship and conflict resolution practices. And he believes that some of the old systems were effective in averting GBV and that they can be reintroduced in relevant and effective ways. For him, approaching GBV from the context of culturally relevant models in Rwanda necessarily forces the community to confront the brutalities of the colonial era, something that he feels the

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<sup>557</sup> Interview with Seraphine, Haguruka, Dec 21, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>558</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1965), 5.

anti-GBV organizing including by the government and NGOs fails to address.

Explanations such as the ones offered by Jean-Marie can be viewed as a kind of customary rights discourse that aims to recuperate utopian indigenous culture in anti-GBV intervention programming, which is not without complications. After all, African customary institutions such as the native chief systems that persist to this day have been remade by colonial rule in ways that empowered despotic and historically tenuous tribal leadership as native authorities.<sup>559</sup> And these customary institutions have been at the heart of contemporary ethnic conflicts throughout Africa.<sup>560</sup> Moreover, as Marin Chanock points out, in the post-colonial era, the framing of customary rights by African states has often aimed “to posit a concept of cultures as unities, and therefore easily distinguishable and opposed to each other” suggesting that “above and beyond national distinctiveness (based on language, place, historical association and narrative and so on) there is something-larger—European, Asian, African; or Christian, Muslim, Confucian—which distinguishes people from each other.”<sup>561</sup> Chanock also cautions that these discourses “look suspiciously like a different way of talking about racial differences.”<sup>562</sup> Furthermore, as Mamdani notes, the language of protest and political legitimacy including contemporary African discourses of custom reflect the interests of the elite and must be interrogated for what power relationships it seeks to codify.<sup>563</sup> In contemporary Africa, questions about culture and custom often hold troubling implications for women’s rights and pose

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<sup>559</sup> Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

<sup>560</sup> Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identities.”

<sup>561</sup> Martin Chanock, “‘Culture’ and Human Rights: Orientalising, Occidentalising and Authenticity.,” in *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture*, ed. Mahmood Mamdani (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 18.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

<sup>563</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk*, 1.



difficulty in addressing GBV such as child marriages, wife abductions, female circumcision and marital rape.<sup>564</sup>

But questions of customary rights are not always reducible to a reinstitution of pre-colonial structures and are not entirely reflections of elite power. As Issa Shivji notes, the split between rights and justice on the one hand, and African discourses of customary rights and cultural dignity on the other, point to distinct sites where cultural debates are being worked out.<sup>565</sup> Discourses of the customary are at best contradictory and must be understood simultaneously as sites of resistance and means of controlling women. The deployment of customary narratives in framing GBV illustrates that confronting colonial structures remains a concern for Rwandan activists. While customary narratives remain useful depositories of consciousness about the links between colonial and contemporary violence, they also pose dilemmas for women's rights.

#### **4.6 Hamiticism: The Sexual Violence of Imperial Erotics**

During the 1994 genocide, sexual attacks on Tutsi women invoked old colonial stereotypes about their sexuality. As I discuss in the previous chapters, colonial ideologies such as the Hamitic Hypothesis were sexualized tropes that trapped Tutsi women within a binary representation of sexual allure and eminent danger. Discourses about unraveling African women's sexual mystery and achieving victory through collective demystification of female genitals have long been currents running through colonial narratives.<sup>566</sup> In Rwanda, too, they were a part of the colonial

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<sup>564</sup> Mamdani, *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk*.

<sup>565</sup> Issa G Shivji, "Contradictory Perspectives on Rights and Justice in the Context of Land Tenure Reform in Tanzania.," in *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture*, ed. Mahmood Mamdani (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

narrative and emerged again in post-independence political in propaganda literature such as the Hutu Ten Commandments and the Enemy Commission.<sup>567</sup> The informants consistently pointed to the Hamitic myth as a discourse that endangered Tutsi women. For instance, Haguruka's Natalie speaks to the relationship between the genocide and the circulation of the colonial myth surrounding Tutsi women's allure when she recalls: "I am going to rape you so I can know how a Tutsi woman likes sex.' Those words were heard. It would be a street boy enjoying that pleasure. It was like saying I could never reach this woman before but now everything is ok, I can. There is no limit." Avega's Clementine also addresses the link between the sexual aesthetics of Hamiticism and violence when she states, "The Hamitic idea of Tutsi women as beautiful led to this notion of how to access these women. It is hard to make an outline of how exactly each community perceived that, of course. But even Hutu women considered beautiful were mistaken for Tutsi and raped and killed."<sup>568</sup>

Another theme that emerged in the interviews was the way in which Hamiticism brought Tutsi women into visibility by pegging their sexuality to state security. Tutsi women's signification as clear and present danger is captured by Alice who notes:

Here it is ethnic Tutsi who were targeted. But there was also other violence not just for Tutsi women, especially in military zones. But in the case of the ethnic targeting, it was not for all women. The genocide was planned and there was ideology behind that. During the planning period, they said Tutsi women were corrupting Hutu authorities and military, corrupting them to take the power to infiltrate the state. If a Tutsi woman was married to Hutu the children she had was not Hutu but related to

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<sup>566</sup> Mama, "Sheroes and Villains;" McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Young, *Colonial Desire*; Sander L Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," in *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

<sup>567</sup> For a discussion of the 10 Commandments, see Chapter 2. For a discussion of the Enemy Commission, see Chapter 3.

<sup>568</sup> Interview with Avega co-founder, Clémentine, February 13, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

Tutsi. Many ideologies. This was to make people hate those women. They are going to take your man, they are beautiful etc. this was written in the newspapers and radio.

Many of the informants do not believe that these colonial representations of Tutsi women's sexuality were transformed in the postcolonial era. Instead, they believe that these images became routine ideology that justified sexual violence during the genocide. As Seraphine explains:

Rape in the genocide was prepared for many years. I mean, brainwashing the Hutu group that Tutsi women are snakes etc. Raping them was a weapon, killing them, worse, humiliating because they are Tutsis and Tutsis were not for many years not accepted as Rwandese population. It was said they are foreigners, they are invaders, they are dominating and so on. Rape did not come suddenly.

As Gyanendra Pandey notes, "hostile (quotidian) attitudes toward the poor, and toward women and minorities, translate into a tolerance of organized collective violence against them."<sup>569</sup> And Seraphine's comments highlight how Rwanda's Hamitic ideology had certainly become a part of the daily lexicon of the society.

While the colonial era emerged as a critical site of GBV formation, the informants did not presume that Rwandan women's predicament and was solely the result of colonialism. Many of them noted that pre-colonial cultural beliefs and practices were just as important in sustaining women's vulnerability in society. As Angélique explains, some cultural attitudes of gender cannot be said to be colonial imports because:

The general perception before 1994 was that women cannot be in decision-making situations. Women didn't have a voice. For example, talking publicly was not frequent in the custom. To hold a speech with many people gathered were not common. In custom, even in family event, you had to ask husband/man to speak.

The pre-colonial era, therefore, is not portrayed as one of gender egalitarianism. For instance,

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<sup>569</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12.

informants often recalled stories about traditionally rigid gender roles that their own elders used to tell. “Before the genocide, women did not climb roofs and fix things,” recalls Pauline, a social worker at Avega, “even my grandmother did not believe that women should climb roofs and did not let her children or us do that. We did not believe women should be public that much. Many stories like that. But after the genocide, the widows did these things for the first time.”<sup>570</sup> Avega informants also pointed to pre-colonial customs surrounding widows that were confining women and that only began to loosen after the genocide politicized widows. Faced with new realities in the wake of the genocide, the widows had to shed many of patriarchal values they internalized growing up. Informants also highlighted the fact that even in areas where colonial control was weaker, ideas that upheld women’s subordination were commonplace.

While the informants recognized many pre-colonial social relations as key in women’s subordination, many also rejected the proposition that patriarchal ideas about Tutsi women were mainly pre-colonial. When asked if Rwandan cultural beliefs were a more important source of stereotypes of Tutsi women and thus the main reason behind their rape in 1994, a number of the respondents offered a nuanced view of this internal/external dynamic of gender politics in Rwanda. For instance, Chantal replies, “I don’t know. It is not all from religion because even before the arrival of catholic and external religion, it was like that but I think the ideas of Hamiticism were occidental ideas.”<sup>571</sup> For her, there are various sources of patriarchy and she locates the particularly ethnicized definitions of Rwandan women within a different genealogy than that of global patriarchy. Clémentine makes a bolder declaration arguing, “there is no origin on these Hamitic stereotypes in Rwandan culture. It came from outside the culture. It was the divide and rule of colonial experience in all of Africa.” Here the colonial genealogy of Tutsi

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<sup>570</sup> Interview with Avega counselor, Pauline, February 13, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>571</sup> Interview with Avega regional director, Chantal, January 13, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

women's association with the Hamitic myth is clear and her complicates western feminist assumptions that global hierarchy wherein men rule over women sets the stage for GBV in conflict zones. This is a particularly interesting argument coming from Clémentine who puts the strongest emphasis on bad governance as a root of genocidal rapes. However, despite her assertions that state failure is ultimately responsible for the mass sexual violation of women, she resists monolithic articulations of GBV in conflict zones. Instead, she simultaneously accounts for the colonial role in producing gendered distortion in Rwandan ethnic history and its long-standing repercussions for Tutsi women noting:

What the oral traditions tell are different from the colonialist misleading story. For example, the oral traditions about queens told of how they were noble and not even exposed to the public that much. Their associations with public actions, killings, assassinations etc., conflicts with their traditional roles of dance, drama, story telling, fashion shows etc. Their roles were mostly behind the public scene, in the palaces. These were much more the kinds of works they were associated with. The colonial narratives were then highly misleading. In fact, you might even get a Hutu man tell you that Tutsis women in traditional stories were very kind. Even if you saw them they were kind and you would not leave them without a cow. That is what they were known for. It is when the introduction of a divide and conquer rule that really heighten these stories.

Such an account points to a different historicity of both Rwandan society and violence against Tutsi women. Clémentine rejects the genocidal state's narratives that situated the meaning of ethnic identities, particularly that of Tutsi identity, within a colonial foundational narrative of feudalism. While the fearsome image of the Tutsi queens and royals dominated colonial narratives and circulated in the post-independence government historicity, Clémentine points to a different relationship between gender, ethnicity, history and violence. She ruptures the official narratives of the genocidal state by drawing on local memory and lived experience to counter the long-standing association of Tutsi femininity with state endangerment. In doing so, she makes visible colonial complicity in the creation of ethnic mythologies as well as the

culpability of the post-independence government. When asked how these external ideas about Tutsi women become ingrained in Rwandan society Rwagitare, a social worker with Avega similarly notes:

During the colonial era, that is when the Rwandan traditional society—living together, friendly—shifted. It was a colonial weapon. You can find that traditionally classifications were more economically or wealth based. There was no racial basis for it. Rwandan society was actually known for being coherent so to colonize it, it was imperative to fragment the people. First was Germans, then came Belgians found it easier to convince the Tutsi to ally with them. The search for purity brought about hatred.<sup>572</sup>

While they situate the making of rape in the complex intersection of patriarchy, empire and race and they clearly identify the effects of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial gender belief systems on GBV, the interviewees also uniformly hold as ultimately responsible the extremist Hutu government and the men who committed the rapes in 1994. After all, the genocide was planned, they say. But crucially, in these narratives colonial legacies and postcolonial political practices are not mutually exclusive. Instead, the interviewees view the postcolonial state operating in tandem with a colonial logic. For instance, Clémentine notes, “during the independence, the Hutu/Tutsi conflict was being tutored by the Belgians for ‘revolution.’” For Clémentine, even the revolution for independence exists within a colonial paradigm, echoing Mamdani’s argument that African revolutions such as the Rwandan independence revolution of 1959 need to be problematized.<sup>573</sup> As he notes, the Rwanda’s anti-colonial revolution may have led to the exit of the Belgians but it had not fundamentally altered ethnic identities as the basis of political identity.<sup>574</sup> Similarly, Rose asserts:

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<sup>572</sup> Interview with an Avega social worker, Rwagitare, Dec 18, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>573</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

Rwandan authorities continued to teach colonial divisions because they wanted to maintain themselves in power. They tried to tell the population that because of the Mwami before independence, other Tutsis were also oppressors. The new regime told the population old stories, which had been changed anyway.<sup>575</sup>

Thus, as Clémentine points out, “It was bad governance based on hate but drawing on false assumptions.” The idea of contemporary governance and historical legacy are not framed as diametrically opposed, as Niyonkuru explanation reveals:

There is a relationship between depictions of women in governance and GBV, colonial or postcolonial. When the government is fighting GBV actively and has an interest in fighting it, the risk of GBV is low. Now, the government is receptive to GBV efforts, it is involving all sectors, laws have been put to place etc. So now it is not as easy for GBV to erupt.<sup>576</sup>

Historical factors appear as important dimensions in the genocidal governments pursuit of GBV.

#### **4.7 Ethnic Refusals as a Response to the Colonial Legacy Gender-Based Violence**

In 2003 Rwanda ratified a new constitution. Driven by the memory of the genocide of 1994 and with an explicit mission to dismantle the conditions that led to catastrophe, the new constitution aimed to build a new nation based on principles of national unity. The constitution states, “Considering that we enjoy the privilege of having one country, a common language, a common culture and a long shared history which ought to lead to a common vision of our destiny.”<sup>577</sup> It also notes that the government’s task is to ensure the “eradication of ethnic, regional and other divisions and promotion of national unity.”<sup>578</sup> As of 2003, Rwanda no longer acknowledged ethnic identities prohibits their public invocation.

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<sup>575</sup> Interview with Avega leader, Rose, March 9, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>576</sup> Interview with Haguruka lawyer, Niyonkuru, April 13, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>577</sup> “The Constitution of The Republic Of Rwanda.” Preamble #7. <http://www.rwandahope.com/constitution.pdf>

<sup>578</sup> Ibid. Article 9, Preamble #2 and #7. (accessed May 26, 2014).

The platform of national unity has met some criticism, particularly by outside observers, who see it as an extreme measure by top down government decree and as a smokescreen for minority rule by a Tutsi-dominated party.<sup>579</sup> But it has surprising and strident support from women's groups, including groups survivor groups like Avega, whose Tutsi identity was the very cause of their victimization and their organizational *raison d'être*. But Avega interviewees struck a delicate balance between their predicament as Tutsi victims and their future investments in national unity. For instance, interviewees often spoke of themselves as "survivors" and hardly address themselves as "Tutsi" when speaking about the present time. They used the term "Tutsi" only in the context of past events. And they would recall, "Tutsi were targeted in 1994," "Tutsi were demonized," or that "there were stereotypes of Tutsi," confining the meaning of the ethnic term within a historical context.

Avega members were not just adherents to the new laws. They were in fact prominent agents in government's movement toward the elimination of ethnic identities. As an organization, Avega came to support a unifying national identity construction project after deep reflection about what had occurred in Rwanda. Chantal recalls:

During the genocide, we learned from our experiences and we talked about strategies to fight the factors that led to genocidal violence. We came to the decision that we wanted positive ways to fight this. Women's organizations played a role in this effort. And we have a flexible government that understands that it can't develop the country without everybody. Everyone is an element of development without segregation.

Informants at Avega also view ethnic identification as a practice of segregation, alluding to its colonial history. When asked about why they support the legal elimination of ethnicity and how they reconcile being a survivor group of Tutsi widows, the interviewees gave complex

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<sup>579</sup>For a critique of the doctrine of national unity, see Human Rights Watch. "Rwanda: End Attacks on Opposition Parties: Intimidation of Political Opponents Increases in Advance of Presidential Election." February 10, 2010. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/02/10/rwanda-end-attacks-opposition-parties>. (accessed May 26, 2014).



explanations that weaved colonial history, patriarchy, violence and building a platform for peace.

As Chantal explains:

Ethnic identifications were a tool to know if you were Hutu or Tutsi in order to carry out ethnic segregation. You took the ethnics of your father and if you a Hutu man married a Tutsi woman, the children were considered Hutu. It was patriarchal and in Rwanda, the father was the head of the family and you take the ethnics of the father. If you wanted to ask for a job, after your first name, the second line asked for your ethnic identity. Even when you start school they ask you the ethnic group. It was done to segregate you and deny your rights. It was not a peaceful tool. After the genocide, we said no to ethnicity. In history, they tell us this was brought to us by the colonials.... It did not exist before so why maintain that? There were no identity cards before...maybe ethnic identities did exist but not structured and were not aimed at segregating.

When addressing questions about whether or not it is a paradox for member of a group like Avega that exclusively defines survivors as Tutsi who lived in Rwanda during the genocide to endorse the elimination for the very categories that gave rise to it, Angélique says “no.” For her, “the campaign against GBV nationally goes all the way to the grassroots but based on the idea of one population and not divided into sects.” She finds national unity appealing because it is based on a collective desire to step away from the country’s colonial legacy and is a stance that developed as a result of extensive dialogue about what had occurred in Rwanda. She maintains:

During the genocide, we learned from our experiences and we talked about strategies to fight the factors that led to genocidal violence. We came to the decision that we wanted positive ways to fight this. Women’s organizations played a role in this effort. And we have a flexible government that understands that it can’t develop the country without everybody. Everyone is an element of development without segregation.

Hence, Avega’s reasons for supporting national unit reveal a connection between ethnicity, GBV and colonialism.

Informants at Haguruka were also supportive of efforts to eliminate ethnic categorization.

Legal expert Etienne contends, for instance:

Ethnicity is ideology that was brought to Rwanda many years ago, which was used for justification for excluding Tutsi groups from power. They had to create this idea, that Tutsi are not native to Rwanda. But there is no scientific proof that can prove this. If you look at our history, all groups, Tutsi, Hutu, Twa, were sharing the same ethnic clans. The categories are not valid. One can believe in a history where everyone in Africa is coming from somewhere, because of disease, natural disaster, maybe famine, people coming from everywhere. But there is no scientific research that proves that Tutsis alone came from everywhere. We still believe that ethnicity was a creation to exclude a group. It was a political ideology meant to divide. It has no place and right to be in the leadership.<sup>580</sup>

While members admit that ethnic issues often arise in their work, they nonetheless ground their interpretations of these issues within a legal mandate. Seraphine notes:

There is no way that ethnic issues or the consequences of the genocide cannot come up sometimes in the cases we see. We Rwandese, government and non-government, are dealing with the consequences of the genocide. We cannot ignore them. Here, we deal with it but it is under the violation of human rights. We have victims of the genocide who come to us to claim for their rights... We have around four hundred women and children who brought cases that are related to the genocide. But we don't take an ethnic framework. It is not in the legal framework. It is the national legal framework we use.

For Haguruka, the damage caused by ethnic politics outweighs its use in addressing the ethnic dimension of the genocide. Although the organization was involved with rights work on behalf of women in children prior to 1994, after the genocide it was as a changed organization and many of the leaders believe that a peace agenda in Rwanda is more viable if grounded in a rights-based, single national identity framework.

In their rejection of ethnic categories, the interviewees sometimes deployed universalizing and essentializing gender frameworks, articulating women's issue within a meta-narrative of national identity. Their preference for national rights over ethnic rights may seem like an example of how Rwandan activists and NGOs are in line with western feminists' universalizing framework such as "women's human rights" that erase historical specificities. As

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<sup>580</sup> Interview with *Haguruka* legal advocate, Etienne, April 11, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

we will see in the following section, in many respects, the informants' political orientations align with western universalism for a number of complicated reasons. Nevertheless, the participants see their positions as direct rejection of colonial distortions that endanger women. They view the new non-ethnicized citizenry as an experimental identity-in-the making, and are fully aware that their support for national unity is a new undertaking. Their new sense of identity is partly driven by a desire to distance themselves from the social and psychological damage exacted by colonial structure, not the desire to recreate historically accurate identities.

While the refusal of ethnic identity is a politically complex position that promises hopeful direction for the fight against GBV, it nevertheless raises some complications for feminist theorizing. As feminist theorists of nationalism point out, the invocation of a unified and homogenized population under the banner of the nation also tend to obscure internal differences.<sup>581</sup> Mobilizing a population within a normative identity has often translated into hegemonic practices and surveillance of those who do not fit the body politics of the state.<sup>582</sup> Furthermore, in increasingly militarized African countries, women's NGOs have not completely escaped corrupt national power politics and often exhibited a brand of conservatism although they are quick to reject their embroilment in national politics.<sup>583</sup> Given these trends, Rwandan

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<sup>581</sup> Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*); Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review*, no. 44 (1993): 61–80; Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Minoq Moallem, *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1999); Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London, UK: Zed Books, 1986).

<sup>582</sup> Jasbir K Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Zillah Eisenstein, *Sexual Decoys: Gender, Race and War in Imperial Democracy* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2007); Bhattacharjee and Silliman, *Policing the National Body*; Enloe, *Maneuvers*.

<sup>583</sup> Amina Mama, "Strengthening Civil Society: Participatory Action Research in a Militarized State," *Development in Practice* 10, no. 1 (2000): 59–70.

women's rights activists' endorsement of singular national identity raises questions, particularly in light of the ongoing criticism of the Rwandan government's top-heavy and militarized political platform.<sup>584</sup> For instance, despite the emergence of a powerful anti-GBV movement in Rwanda, many of the informants often feigned mild interest in the extensive GBV taking place in neighboring DRC. At the time of the interviews, the DRC was still in active conflict and Rwandan troops were widely believed to be guilty of GBV there. The informants often restricted their analysis of GBV to the genocide and confined it within the history of Rwanda. Framing GBV in a regional context might not be possible for the informants for a number of reasons. For one thing, the war in DRC is partly connected to the Rwandan genocide where Hutu perpetrators have been in hiding in the DRC. And although the Rwandan government has been accused of lending tacit support to the DRC rebel groups such as M23, one of the main perpetrators of GBV, the informants may not view the DRC as a separate conflict from the 1994 genocide..<sup>585</sup> They often display unwavering support for their government, calling it "the most gender-responsive government." As one informant emphatically states, "we have a government that understands the need for gender-equity so don't come over here and criticize our government." While the potential complications that could result from the pursuit for singular identity cannot be clarified here, I note them as ongoing thorny issues plaguing feminist theorizing of African conflicts and GBV.

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<sup>584</sup> Rwandan state's national unity doctrine was a contentious issue in the most recent Rwandan elections of 2010, for instance, where groups such as Human Rights Watch decried the government for using the illegality of ethnicity as a way of intimidating opposition candidates under the auspices of national unity. See Human Rights Watch. "Intimidation of Political Opponents Increases in Advance of Presidential Election." February 10, 2010. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/02/10/rwanda-end-attacks-opposition-parties>. (accessed May 26, 2014).

<sup>585</sup> Chris McGreal, "Rwanda's Paul Kagame Warned He May Be Charged with Aiding War Crimes," *The Guardian*, July 25, 2012, sec. World news, [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/25/rwanda-paul-kagame-war-crimes?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/25/rwanda-paul-kagame-war-crimes?CMP=tw_t_gu). (accessed May 26, 2014).

#### 4.8 Ethnographic Failures: Rights, Culture and Patriarchy

Kamala Visweswaran notes that ethnographic “failure signals a project that may no longer be attempted, or at least not on the same terms” and instead demands a recalibration of our approach.<sup>586</sup> This means that ethnographic failures—those moments when our lens does not yield what we wish it to, when our informants challenge our project through refusals, or when our framework fails us through the ethnographic process—must be treated as a critical part of the research. In this section, I examine the ethnographic failures that haunted this study and the possibilities such failure.

When I began fieldwork, I had several expectations of what my study would reveal. For instance, I expected African activists narratives to provide very different reasons that cause GBV in conflict zones than the western feminist explanations that reduce GBV to universal patriarchy. Because of the dominance of western theories, I also reasoned that the west frequently and systematically marginalizes narratives of global south activists that do not adhere to notions of global patriarchal oppression of women or that do not uphold ideas about the global solidarity of women. Moreover, I expected the inordinate influence of western feminist human rights activism to confine theorizing and the activism of GBV within human rights and interventionist frameworks. Therefore, if African activists became the center of knowledge production I believed that new explanations would emerge instead. In order to capture the anticipated rifts between Rwandan and western discourses of GBV, I opted for genealogical theoretical and methodological frameworks.

What I discovered was a more complex story that problematized genealogical approaches and challenged the expectations I set up based on these models. Rather than a clear polarity between global north and south, my study showed that African groups actively adapted,

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<sup>586</sup> Visweswaran, *Fictions Of Feminist Ethnography*, 100.

advanced and, at times, even invented the dominant language of human rights in anti-GBV activism and theorizing. At the same time, their views highlight neglected causes of GBV. Instead of neat distinctions, I found a transnational, migrating epistemology of GBV. Far from being a uni-directional flow of knowledge from the west to the global south, the discursive field of anti-GBV activism is more of a dialectical construction between Western and African feminists.

One of the most common interviewee responses regarding the definition of GBV emphasizes the connection between rights and the violation of mostly women (although they did point to cases of GBV against men on occasion), as exemplified by the comments below:

We understand [GBV] as acts of violence, which can be done to oppress a man or a woman. But in many cases women but men also can also experience GBV but those cases are lower. —Rose

Non-consensual sexual abuse. Classically speaking. Even in families, husband and wife, there can be GBV. Also denial of property, inheritance. —Rwagitare<sup>587</sup>

Any act physical, verbal based on gender and denying rights. In most cases, GBV happens on grounds of gender against women and children. —Agate<sup>588</sup>

Such discourses of rights and oppression on the basis of gender are ubiquitously held. While the interviewees believed that gendered violence can affect men and women, as legal advocate Peter puts it, “ninety-nine percent of the cases of GBV in conflict and non conflict are against women.”<sup>589</sup> In most the informants’ narratives, GBV boils down to the oppression of women that results from a lack of protection in the law. Indeed, at the time of the genocide, the rights of

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<sup>587</sup> Interview with an Avega social worker, Rwagitare, December 18, 2010, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>588</sup> Interview with Haguruka legal advocate, Agate, April 11, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

<sup>589</sup> Interview with Avega legal expert, Peter, March 9, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

women in term of work, family and political involvement were limited if not altogether missing. Not only was the genocidal government slow to adopt women's rights but it was also a notorious abuser of women throughout its tenure. As several Haguruka members points out, a key impetus for the formation of the organization was this long-standing neglect of women's rights by the state and the environment of impunity engendered by this neglect. The interplay between peacetime and wartime attitudes of the informants echoes western feminist notions of patriarchal "continuum of violence."<sup>590</sup> In this sense, Rwandan women share a vocabulary of gender, patriarchal oppression and wartime GBV common among western feminist theorists. For instance, when asked the difference between the various definitions of GBV used by various international and local groups, Peter responds:

The differences are just very minimal. You may find in the regional definition an integration of the international ones or you may find the local ones drawing on a larger understanding of the international or national definitions to better understand the group they are working with at the local level. We pick key words from the international laws the ones that can help our beneficiaries' understanding of what we are talking about. The difference lies in how the different users find the appropriate way to communicate to their audiences. But they retain the key words of international definitions. You may not adopt it as the Bible, but you will refer to it. Even the governments, they will say 'what does the international community talk about GBV?' And you will find whenever we sensitize or train, they want to know this hierarchy and they refer to the flow of information from the United Nations to the African Union to the African community and groups.<sup>591</sup>

This narrative shows the power of the west and its institutions in setting the terms of GBV discourse. However, it also reveals how Rwandan activists tend to approach these legal hierarchies as guideposts for their own context. Lawyer Niyonkuru puts the point this way:

There is a global movement to empower women. So this is something the country has to catch up to and the government has to promote it in its internal politics. I think in some way GBV awareness is not something that has been initiated by the

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<sup>590</sup> Cockburn, "The Continuum of Violence: A Gender Perspective on War and Peace."

<sup>591</sup> Interview with Avega legal expert, Peter, March 9, 2011, Kigali, Rwanda.

Africans alone. I think, it is something that is being pushed from somewhere else and maybe our own State has approved of it. That is what I imagine.

Peter and Niyonkuru's views are partly shaped by their legal training. But as Inderpal Grewal notes, such positions are also produced within transnational networks in which a neoliberal notion of human rights is framed as democratic freedom.<sup>592</sup> Global South approaches within this environment reflect a belief that international laws are "more equitable and just, even if there seemed no clear means of knowing whether it indeed was."<sup>593</sup> Indeed, as Jean-Marie's critique of the right-based definitions of GBV earlier in this chapter reveals, not all interviewees believe that internationally inspired, rights-based approaches are indeed more effective in addressing GBV.

Even though the international influence on Rwandan GBV discourses are clear, what is also interesting is how Rwandan feminists in fact even drive some of the international discourses on GBV that emphasize rights and patriarchy. For instance, through their extensive participation in and advocacy around the ITCR, Avega members actively shaped international debates and legal practices around rape and other forms of gender based violence in genocide.<sup>594</sup> Along with other survivor groups, Avega was instrumental in preparing witnesses as well as prosecutors in framing sexual violence as a crime of genocide during the ITCR trials. It was also a proactive initiator of international coalitions with western feminist groups. For instance, when Avega members realized that the perpetrators of the genocide held by the ICTR were receiving extensive HIV/AIDS care while the women they infected through genocidal rape lacked anti retroviral drugs, they sought solidarity with western feminists. Their massive and sustained

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<sup>592</sup> Grewal, *Transnational America*, 125.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>594</sup> Jonneke Koomen, "Without These Women, the Tribunal Cannot Do Anything: The Politics of Witness Testimony on Sexual Violence at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society* 38, no. 2 (2013): 253–78.



initiative led to the establishment of groups such as the Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (We-Actx), a women's health NGO made up of western doctors and other health care workers in fall 2003. As this case illustrates, African anti-GBV activist groups such as Avega are not merely adapting western theories and implementing them in local contexts. They are also originating some of the discourses on sexual violence and war.

These stories demonstrate the difficulty of disentangling the flow of influence within transnational settings. Global South feminists are not simply catching up to or executing western theoretical and political innovation. Nor are they always in the margins of transnational feminist alliances, at times even setting the agenda of global women's rights discourses. But it is important not to overstate the agency of these African groups as superseding the dictates of global hierarchies. As Sondra Hale argues, rigid expectations in transnational work between the global south and the west often miss the critical point that "imperial forces and imperial erotics are extant and heterogeneous."<sup>595</sup> Imperializing discourses produce multiple effects. And consensus, affiliations and collaborations exist alongside and within imperial configurations.

The existence of affinities across transnational feminist context does not mean that ruptures between the west and the global south are overstated. On the contrary, our presumptions about empire necessitate an account of affinities, collaborations, shared vocabularies and cooperative intervention as well as capture discord and tension. But African feminist investments in the universalizing/globalizing discourses of human rights and international justice should not be reduced to mere regurgitations of imperializing narratives. They are not entirely oppositional and they do not provide a clear evidence of global feminist affinity.

While Rwandan women important producers of transnational knowledge about GBV,

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<sup>595</sup> Sondra Hale, "Transnational Gender Studies and the Migrating Concept of Gender in the Middle East and North Africa," *Cultural Dynamics: An International Journal for the Study of Processes and Temporality of Culture*, 2009, 134.

they are not at the helm of power in the production of rights discourses. As Grewal notes, “the regime of human rights evolved in the shadow of development to address its limitations and to ensure the continued authority of knowledge production by the ‘developed world’ over the ‘developing world’ within transnational connectivities.”<sup>596</sup> And these human rights regimes have produced “feminist transnational connectivities” wherein “the search for information, support, and funding sources (mostly in the west) created new encounters and connections between on the one hand powerful organizations like the UN and on the other hand other feminist organizations from the West and small organizations in the non-West,” leading to “a project of empowerment through the insertion of global regimes of women’s rights as human rights.”<sup>597</sup> In other words, the agency of Rwandan women in rights discourse takes shape within a highly asymmetrical feminist coalitional environment. The Global North is invested in an international women’s human rights struggle wherein the “third world victim” emerges as the critical linchpin that consolidates the unified liberal feminist subject, woman.

It is also worth noting that the main vehicle through which these rights discourses and coalitions are formed is the United Nations and its various women’s rights instruments like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As Grewal notes, while the UN is not a united entity and its different offices are often at odds with one another, “‘international’ alliances forged under the auspices of the UN enabled the deployment of imperial discourses by powerful states.”<sup>598</sup> The UN is a powerful vehicle that naturalizes and empowers the nation-state’s grip on its population. Indeed, the knowledge produced by Rwandan women as well as the rest of the transnational connectivities of feminists

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<sup>596</sup> Grewal, *Transnational America*, 131.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

has opened new prospects for the state to manage its population. Groups such as Avega and Haguruka operate within a UN-nation-state financial and development configurations. As many informants report, they usually work as implementers of these top-down agendas.

Asymmetrical political conditions also bear on third world women's autonomous production of knowledge in various ways, not least of which is through the donor-client dynamic. Although donors may not entirely dominate the mission of grassroots groups, they remain consequential. In the case of the organizations in this study, for instance, external donations make up the bulk of their organizational budgets. This has implications for what types of projects are envisioned, which ones get off the ground and what populations receive them. For instance, when asked about how much donor practices dictate the organizational programmatic choices of Avega, Chantal, who works closely with the donor community notes that funding inconsistency leads to the relative neglect of their southern region constituency:

It is an issue because we work with funds from donors. We don't have our funds. Sometimes we have a program and we don't have funding to put them into practice. We are trying now to be autonomous. But that is at a very low level. We didn't move or go out of our mission for donors but donors don't fund what we want to be funded sometimes. We present our programs and they choose what they want, which is limited. ... For example, now, we are working in three provinces but we have members everywhere...if you go to the west and the eastern provinces we don't get money for those areas. The funders pick the areas. They don't say why and they say we work in a certain province or in Kigali.

When asked why donors have a preference for certain region, Chantal thought it is "perhaps because the donors like to be in the areas with western amenities." Her analysis captures how funding inequity inhibits investment on projects that do not conform to donor interests and hint as why genealogical frameworks that complicate the logic of universal women's rights do not inform GBV theorizing.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

In undertaking this study, my goal was to examine if the theorizing of anti-violence African activists accounts for colonial gender genealogies of sexualized tropes such as the Hamitic Tutsi woman that were the ideological bedrocks of the 1994 rapes. My research shows a mixture of narratives. Some explanations echo western feminist discourses of human rights and patriarchy while others argue that indeed colonialism was a critical factor in the marking of Tutsi women as rapable. While my findings did not reveal a clear rupture between the theoretical approaches of African and western feminists, they raise questions about the meaning of affinity, the conditions of discord and the politics of possibility in the era of empire.

# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

A number of contemporary African conflicts have resorted to a deliberate extensive and deliberate use of gender-based violence (GBV), especially targeting women and girls for sexual violence. Given the ethnic dimension in many of these conflicts, the question of indigeneity has featured in a central way. But these questions are partly rooted in colonial practices that were preoccupied with “the Native question” and institutionalized racialized and sexualized concepts of indigeneity in cultural, political and economic institutions. A close interrogation of the colonial politics of ethnic formation reveals the degree to which the regulation of women’s bodies was lodged deep within the colonial administrative agendas.

Despite these connections between sexual politics, violence and colonialism, feminist scholarship in conflict zones has not paid much attention to how current ethnic wars are also entrenched in a colonial genealogy and how much colonial configurations enabled current sexual violence in conflict zones. Instead, this body of work tends to evacuate the analysis of GBV out of its ethnic and historical contexts. But such ahistoricized views poses a challenge in understanding the relationship between GBV and African conflicts zones, which have long been shown to have a deep institutional and discursive continuity with the colonial era. One reason that western feminism’s failure to integrate this long acknowledged genealogy has to do with its investment in universalizing women’s oppression and framing the questions of GBV within human rights discourses. By looking at the making GBV and violability in conflict zones genealogically, my dissertation addresses a major oversight.

To address how the colonial experience shaped the endemic use of GBV in contemporary African conflict zones, I examine one of Africa's biggest tragic conflicts, the Rwandan genocide of 1994, and assess the role of colonialism in informing GBV in that conflict. Rwanda is a provocative location from which to analyze questions of colonial complicity in the use of GBV in modern conflicts for three reasons. The deployment of GBV as a tool of genocide in 1994 was also epic. Furthermore, the country's post-independence politics was mired in the legacy of a colonial notion of ethnic indigeneity. And finally, since the end of the genocide Rwanda has emerged as a transformed place in the fight against GBV and women's rights. All these factors make it an important site from which to launch inquiry about the complex causes of GBV and to consider how the most sophisticated thinkers on GBV in conflict zones account for historical factors in making of sexual warfare. Through the prism of the Rwandan genocide of 1994, I explore how the formation of colonial ethnic identities signified Tutsi women in matters of sovereign rule and state security. By focusing on the colonial link on GBV, I integrate race as an indispensable logic driving sexual violence and rape in contemporary African conflicts.

I begin by examining how Belgian colonialism fundamentally altered social and political institutions in Rwanda by reinvigorating a weakening Tutsi regime as the executor of indirect rule. And I trace how in doing so, Belgium relied on a profoundly sexual grammar. In Rwanda, the widespread codification of the Hamitic Hypothesis was a highly gendered narrative that helped organize the very premise of the new state in racialized ethnic terms. By refracting Hamiticism through the politics of hybridity, I show the critical symbolic terrain that Tutsi women occupied as figures of this theory. These static, erotic and, yet, dangerous significations tied Tutsi women to narratives of territory, fertility and security. By examining the colonial representations of Tutsi women by various colonial agents, I show how Tutsi femininity was at

the heart of the definition of indigeneity and setting up Tutsi women's bodies as contested sites of citizenship and belonging in post-independence politics of nation building.

I then examine the continuities between colonial and postcolonial sexual politics in by looking discourses on population explosion and Tutsi refugees that animated at the post-independence era. As a persistent discourse surrounding Rwanda since the advent of colonialism, overpopulation was the colonial narratives that coded Tutsi refugees as sources of crisis for the post-independence state. The convergence of population explosion and refugee crisis discourses in Rwandan politics reenacted colonial racial and sexual politics in nationalist politics. The parallel reading of population and refugee discourses further highlights how both population and refugee are biopolitical constructs that racially and sexually charged Tutsi women in the entire region's politics. Thus I show why the Rwandan genocide resorted to gender-based violence and how colonialism was a culprit in the making of it.

In order to draw on the hidden genealogies of GBV, I also center the knowledge production of African activists with intimate knowledge of GBV in conflict zones. Based ethnographic fieldwork with some of Rwanda's most authoritative anti-violence activists, I examine the colonial legacy of gender-based violence in the 1994 genocide. I show that while the informants shared theoretical overlaps with western feminist discourses of GBV and patriarchy, they also frequently highlight the link between colonial politics of representation and sexuality, admit the historical genealogy of rapability and take a vocal stance against colonially defined ethnic politics as a threat to women by supporting a non-ethnically defined political citizenship, for instance. In this sense, their articulations differ sharply from dominant western feminist literature on the subject expose the limitations of western feminist explanations of GBV in conflicts zones. However, some of their theoretical and political overlap with western feminists'

human rights based framing of GBV also points to some difficulty in genealogical approaches to GBV. While the insights from the interviews at times even challenge the west/global south split presumed in this study, they also confirm the importance of re-scripting frameworks that ignore the intersection of empire and ethnic conflict in the shaping of GBV as well as the new postcolonial frameworks we use to reconsider these dominant ideas.

My project raises hard questions about the meaning of affinity, the conditions of discord and the politics of possibility in the era of empire. Its main motivation was to probe the politics of GBV without re-centering imperializing feminist tropes in analyzing violence against women of color and of the global south. Through a historicized framing, my goal was to offer a decolonized feminist articulation of violence in conflict zones that resists naturalizing imperial and nationalist projects in transnational feminist organizing against violence. While I find it important to continue exploring decolonizing concepts and methodologies, my project has also posed some conceptual, political and ethical conundrums in terms of studying violence against African women. For instance, I often struggled with the implication of a historical lens for the urgency of the gendered crimes taking place now. Does the emphasis on genealogy absolve known contemporary rapists and violent state agents by overly contextualizing their motivations? There was also the politics framing African women within the lens of victimhood in an era when imperial politics in highly invested making visible violated women of the global south. Given the central role the idea of the third world war victim has played in contemporary imperial wars of conquests in Afghanistan, Iraq and a host of global south nations, the trope of the woman victim poses real questions about imperial complicity. There was also the issue of the now perennial discursive practice of associating Rwanda with genocide. Although many aspects of the genocide are still unknown, many of the perpetrators remain at large, and many more survivors still seek



answers, Rwanda has is now perpetually pegged to its genocide. My informants, who often wanted to share their stories, were also sure to note that they are fatigued with the army of researchers and NGOs who they feel are preoccupied with events that even survivors wish to transcend. While from the point of view of GBV and coloniality I found Rwanda to be a productive site, the ethics of studying Rwanda through its genocide remains one that I have not managed to answer or ignore.

My ethnographic study also raised several dilemmas for me. My findings challenged my assumption about the gulf between western and global feminist discourses of GBV. And while I was committed to telling an African activist story of GBV, I was also left wondering the extent to which African women's organizations operating in the backdrop of a highly militarized state can serve as a barometer of independent, activist theorizing of gender-based violence. While I do not claim to have suitable answers, I briefly acknowledge these questions and dilemmas here hoping to stimulate dialogues about cross-cultural research, feminist political alliance in the era of empire, globalization and militarism.

While I maintain that the colonial experience has been central to the politics of contemporary African violence and that it should inform theorizing about sexual violence in contemporary conflict, I am not suggesting that GBV is an entirely colonial invention and that colonialism is the dynamic through which all things Africa can gain meaning. As Anne McClintock notes, not all regions that experienced colonialism are “necessarily primarily preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with European colonialism.”<sup>599</sup> Nevertheless, an engagement of the rhetoric, ideology, and institutional evidence points to magnitude of the colonial role in underpinning the political logic and practice of the continent.

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<sup>599</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 12.

# APPENDIX A

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# APPENDIX B

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