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## Ibitero: Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide

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### Introduction

The history of the construction and manipulation of ethnic divisions in Rwanda has had powerful effects on both politics and policies in the country since its independence. Ideas about the origins, essential characteristics, and political identities of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa became so deeply embedded in Rwandan society that the plan to get rid of one entire group in 1994 actually seemed to make sense to many.

In my analysis of ordinary Rwandan Hutus' understandings of, and responses to, the anti-Tutsi rhetoric broadcast on RTLM, I found that these people had been repeatedly exposed to messages of hate and division via the radio and other media (see Chretien et al 1995). Ethnic divisions and ethnic hatred alone, however, do not fully account for the motivations of those who participated in the genocide. Other authors have established the political motivations of the genocide's architects for using ethnicity to achieve the consolidation of power (Chretien 1985, 1991, 1995; Des Forges 1999; Prunier 1995; Taylor 1999; Lemarchand 1998). As one looks down the socio-political hierarchy, however, the imperatives of consolidating political power in Hutu hands become more ambiguous, and a wider range of incentives to violence emerge. The distinctions between categories of perpetrators included 1) those who planned and oversaw the genocide (the "architects"), 2) those who commanded the army ("FAR"), 3) the local militias ("Interahamwe"), and 4) subordinates who carried out their orders.

In addition to these organized forces, however, there was a fifth category: countless ordinary civilians – men, women, and children – who were more informally persuaded to take part in the killing, but who may in fact have killed more innocent people than all the other forces combined.<sup>2</sup> How could so many ordinary people be induced to kill not only strangers, but also neighbors, friends and family? How and why did these people kill, and in what ways were the mechanisms and understandings of their actions different from those of the

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gun-wielding thugs who compelled and coerced them? This is the central question regarding the Rwandan genocide's "popular" dimension (Mamdani 2001), and it is also at the center of my interviews with confessed perpetrators in Rwandan prisons. I agree with Mamdani that "rather than run away from it, we need to realize that it is the 'popularity' of the genocide that is its uniquely troubling aspect" (Mamdani 2001:8). But I reach a very different conclusion from his about the nature of mass participation in the genocide. Mamdani argues that one group can only envision annihilating another if those to be killed are understood to be outsiders, foreigners, and racially distinct. In Rwandan history, he says, such a process of racialized identification did take place, such that ordinary Hutu could view the murder of ordinary Tutsi according to the logic of revenge and resistance against foreign invaders.

My data suggest something different. From conversations with over one hundred ordinary Hutu who participated in the killing of Tutsi in 1994, I conclude that there were a number of reasons why ordinary Hutu peasants killed their neighbors. Issues of "race" and/or ethnicity were not chief among them. This chapter thus moves away from an analysis of ethnic divisions to explore some of the other reasons why ordinary Hutu participated in the genocide. These include the promise or expectation of economic gain, the settling of old scores and rivalries unrelated to ethnic identity, and probably most important, coercion (the threat to "kill or be killed").

Beyond documenting these motivations in the words of the perpetrators themselves, I will explore some of the more subtle discursive aspects of the perpetrators' accounts of the genocide, in an effort to identify the social and cultural perceptions, ideas, and ideologies embedded within them. These less explicit themes, metaphors, and narrative devices (in the Kinyarwanda language) provide insights into some less well understood aspects of popular participation in the Rwandan genocide, including how and why so many people took part, often against their own will, and how they subsequently have made sense of their role in the massacres, and the responsibility they bear for the outcome. Using these materials as a basis for discussion, I aim to redirect Mamdani's attempt to "make the popular agency in the Rwandan genocide thinkable" (Mamdani 2001: 8). In my view, the question is not simply one of individual agency (i.e. conscious intentions), but also of more impersonal structures, perspectives, and circumstances that conspired in 1994 to make such

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extreme violence possible. I will show these structural commonalties in the accounts of over a hundred participants.

As an initial example, one such account of a mob attack (*igitero, pl. ibitero*) in the informant's words shows how the elements of group pressure combined with administrative structures led to casual killings of neighbors and friends. The following informant is a forty-two year old man who had been incarcerated in Gitarama prison for four years at the time of the interview. He identified himself as a cultivator. I interviewed him on September 9, 2000.

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**Interview Excerpt I**

R = Respondent  
I = Interviewer

- 1 R.: Our *Responsable* [person in charge] was the leader of our cell  
(*akarengo*). The *Responsable* said [to me], "So, you there, you are the one  
keeping that person whom we could not find?" But I found ways of getting  
myself out of trouble. I told them that I had just met that person. Apart from  
5 that, I can't say anything. That person is the one who can say something about  
it. He [*Responsable*] told me to follow him and then they herded us together  
with another person. They herded us together (*badushoreye hamwe*). On our  
way, they arrested one person that we met. The people who were herding that  
person passed near our house. He was accused of being an accomplice  
10 (*icyitso*), so they decided to kill him. They told the person who had arrested  
him, "Since you brought your person, you have to kill him yourself." They also  
chose a person who would kill me. Then they brought two other people and  
five kids. They assigned them persons who were going to kill them. We were in  
a queue, each with another person who would kill them. He  
15 [*Responsable*] then said to me, "I told you that you would kill this person by all  
means." They told me that there was no other way except dying with that  
person. They told me to accept. They said: "Do you think we are to blame for  
anything?" Then they started with those kids. One person killed them. He killed  
three children. He hit the kids and they died! At that moment, I did not  
20 understand what was wrong with my head. I felt like I was not a human being  
anymore. Then I said to myself: "You too, hurry up!" For, I was, after all, going  
to die too. And do you think there was any problem between me and that  
person I was about to kill? I immediately killed him.  
I.: How did you kill him?  
25 R.: I killed him with a club (*impiri*). They brought the person who was  
supposed to kill me. Then they told me, "kill that person first and then they  
will kill you too." Then nothing happened. They [*ba--*] snatched a club  
from one person and handed it to me then I killed that one.  
I.: Where did you hit him?  
30 R.: On the head because that person said to me: "If you hit me on the head I  
will die immediately."  
I.: That person said that to you himself?  
R.: That person showed me where I should hit so that he would die quickly.  
I also told the person who was supposed to kill me to watch what I did to  
35 that person so that he could do the same thing to me. That person did  
nothing to me. They then started to say [about me], "If you kill him, his  
elder brother is the head of a large group of people, so you should first  
count them in order to see if they do not exceed us in numbers." When  
they compared, they found out that the number under my brother's

40 leadership exceeded the number of people in that mob attack (*igitero*)  
which came to my place. So, they said: "if you kill this person... you wait!  
...If you kill him, when his brother comes he will finish off your families."  
They said, "leave this one for the moment." So, they spared me.  
Meanwhile, they took me around with them while waiting for my brother.  
45 Then my brother arrived. They said [to him]: "You see they almost killed  
him so you have to buy us some beer." For my brother sold banana wine  
(*urwagwa*). He said: "Well, if it is banana wine [you want], there is  
[plenty]!" They drank the banana beer and that is how I was saved. I went  
home because I was married. When I reached home I went straight to bed.  
50 Whenever I slept, I would to see the person I had killed. I saw him in front  
of my face. Later, they put me in prison. I was imprisoned on August 12,  
1994. After they put me in prison, I came to think and said to myself:  
"Really, the person who accused me did not lie." So, I immediately agreed  
55 with him. After, I agreed. Soldiers brought me and put me in jail. I did not  
even spend a night anywhere else.

### **The Perpetrators Speak**

My interviews with perpetrators were held in a private space and could not be overheard by others. Informants were assured of confidentiality. I made clear that I would not "rat on them" to prison or judicial authorities, or discuss their contributions with high-status Hutu detainees who actually ran the prisons.

Of the approximately one hundred people I interviewed in six Rwandan prisons, all had pleaded guilty to participation in the genocide. These confessions, however, should not be taken as evidence of the prisoner's genuine understanding (or admission) of his/her guilt in committing an act of genocide. Rather, the guilty plea program provided one of the few ways in which people held in appalling conditions since 1994 could envision changing their circumstances.

Also, my identity as a Rwandan Tutsi who had been living outside the country since 1959 was clear to all those whom I interviewed. Although our respective identities or subjectivities were undoubtedly a factor in the conversations, I do not believe that this altered the information offered to me to such an extent that I cannot draw some conclusions from it.

Finally, I conducted all of my interviews in Kinyarwanda, the first (and frequently only) language spoken by all of the interviewees. There was no need for a translator to introduce a third party presence and I was able to process the nuances of the words chosen and their subtle cultural meanings as the talk flowed. The importance of these elements will become clearer in the analysis below.

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## Motives for Killing

Scholars of the Rwandan genocide have identified numerous motivating factors, in addition to, or aside from identity politics, that influenced ordinary Rwandan Hutu to take up arms against their neighbors in 1994 (and before, that is from 1959). The most prevalent explanations are economic and personal rivalries, and a culture of fear or obedience. It is not my purpose to refute any or all of these theories on a macro-social or macro-economic level, but rather to determine the extent to which perpetrators' personal accounts of their experiences in the genocide resonate with these broader explanations, and to see if other explanatory factors emerge from their stories. Predictably, some of the proposed motivations to violence, even if present in 1994, are not central to the perpetrators' stories six years later. Therefore, my data cannot conclusively support or refute these ideas. Rather, I focus on those aspects of the perpetrators' accounts that speak to broader, less conscious discursive structures that provide additional depth, texture, and nuance to the perpetrators' states of mind. First, though, let me acknowledge the wide range of factors present in 1994.

### Economic Motivations

According to many scholars, Hutu peasants had economic motivations for killing Tutsi. At the structural level, increasing pressure on the land (because of increasing population), and a fall in the price of key export crops such as coffee, are mentioned as contributing factors to growing unease, rivalry, and conflict between neighbors in Rwanda in the early 90s (Willame 1995; Uvin 1998:107-108). At the individual level, it is reported that this unease and conflict made it possible for *Interahamwe* and government officials to promise material rewards to potential killers, such as property, businesses, cattle, and land (Prunier 1995:142, African Rights 1994, Des Forges 1999). I did not find many testimonies to this in my interviews. One man told me, "We were told that the Tutsi will take our land and property; we had to defend ourselves and our property." Another admitted that "I did not kill, but I went to steal Tutsi cows; I just looted. I did not kill anybody; I joined a group of people who were eating cows belonging to Tutsi; I just stole some of my neighbors' things." Again, it must be stated that the relative absence of these explanations in the perpetrators' accounts does not indicate anything about the presence of these considerations

on the ground in 1994. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the strength of these explanations at the broader societal level (Verwimp 2003).

### **Personal Rivalries**

Uvin identifies personal enmity as one reason why Hutu peasants attacked their Tutsi neighbors (Uvin 1998:216-217). That is, given the opportunity to “settle a score” under the pretense of participating in a political movement, some Hutu seized the chance to exact revenge on their Tutsi acquaintances and neighbors. While this may well have been true in some situations, I have neither sufficient evidence from my interview data to corroborate this phenomenon, nor the interest in refuting it, as I doubt it was widespread enough in the context of the genocide to “explain” anything.

### **Culture of Fear/Obedience**

The “culturalist” explanation for the scope of the violence holds that Rwandan society is characterized by “systematic, centralized, and unconditional obedience to authority” (Prunier 1998:141). Put otherwise, it is “a culture of fear” (Gourevitch 1998). Mamdani observes that these static explanations are under-politicized, and under-historicized. He argues that “fear – not as a relatively timeless cultural reflex but as a much more time-bound response to a rapidly shifting political and social context” is one of the most important factors in explaining mass participation (Mamdani 2001:191). The fear that Mamdani is referring to is the fear instilled in the Rwandan Hutu peasantry by the ideologues associated with the “Hutu Power” movement. This was the fear of Tutsi domination, of RPF attacks, of a “return” to feudalism. This explanation really stresses the Hutu reaction to feared future outcomes rather than obedience to a feared existing authority.

Mamdani is correct to reject static characterizations of Rwandans as obedient; any careful assessment of acts of resistance against the genocide quickly dispels that myth. Unfortunately, Mamdani’s attempt to restore agency to the average Rwandans who participated in the genocide also misses the mark in certain respects. His argument that Tutsi had been so thoroughly cast as racially “other” that Hutu felt compelled to participate in their annihilation overlooks, or fails to take into account, the fear that Hutu peasants experienced

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towards their administrative superiors who were also Hutu. As I will try to demonstrate below, the perpetrators' accounts suggest that it was not so much a politicized form of fear of future Tutsi control that motivated ordinary Hutu to kill, but rather well-structured, already entrenched mechanisms of coercion. Interview Two (below) clearly illustrates this point, and is very similar to many of the accounts I collected (see Interview One). To reiterate, I draw my conclusion not only from what my informants say, but also how they say it. In the following section, I will provide more examples from the interviews themselves, and try to identify patterns in the perpetrators' discourse that provide further insight into their motivations and ways of understanding their actions.

## **Part II: Analysis of Interviews**

### **Interview Excerpt Two**

The respondent had been held in Butare Prison for three years at the time of the interview. He is 40 years old and he calls himself a poor peasant and cultivator (*umuturage w'umuhinzi*). This interview took place between just the two of us in Butare Prison on September 29, 2000. It illustrates the point that the respondent sees his actions as enmeshed in broad historical patterns that change without explanation.



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### Interview Transcript Two

Key: (I = Interviewer, R = Respondent)  
Butare Prison, September 29 2000).

- 1 I.: What did you confess to?  
R.: I confessed to killings  
I.: Hum...  
R.: That's right. So, ...does that mean that you are still asking me?
- 5 I.: Hum... Killings, that's right. What do you think about it? How it happened?  
R.: Hee? You want me to tell you that story? [laughter]. So, war broke out in the country. In short, I would like to inform you that, before..., first of all, Rwandans, we used to be on good terms.  
I.: Hum.
- 10 R.: You can tell when I was born. You can see that I am a grown-up person. I mean, when a person is 40 years old, that person is old [an adult]. First of all, we Rwandans lived like brothers and sisters [relatives]. The so-called Tutsi and Hutu lived together like brothers and sisters [relatives]. They
- 15 [Hutu and Tutsi] got on well. They used to help each other carry people who were sick to see the doctor.  
Do you know that, eh? When someone had a sick person [at home], another person went to help that person to carry the sick person to the doctor (*guhekerana*)<sup>3</sup>.  
I.: Hmm
- 20 R.: When someone died, others helped them to bury the dead, came to console that person by chatting to her/him (*kumuganiriza*), to give that person something to eat, to come to his aid (*kumutabara*). For example, you fetched water for that person, and to go to ...[not audible] for her/him.
- 25 Yes...Well... then the war started. For us, it was like wind (*umuyaga*)<sup>4</sup>.  
I.: Hmm  
R.: Yes, then in 1994 we abruptly heard that... They [government officials] said "RPF" [Rwanda Patriotic Front]. They said: "in the northern part of the country", that is Byumba. They said: "RPF is killing people." But we also
- 30 managed to meet people who were fleeing, who used to say to us: "They [RPF] kill a person and open that person's belly." Do you understand?  
I.: Hmm, Mhmm!  
R.: Well, they went on. They said: "we have to take part in negotiations." Some went to Arusha for negotiations. They [government officials] allowed
- 35 them [RPF] to come into the country. They put them [RPF] at the CND [Parliament building]. Habyalimana entered negotiations, negotiations, negotiations. They went to establish accords in Arusha for the last time. That is, I guess that he [Habyalimana] went with the Burundi President at that time, except that I don't remember his name. If it's Cyprien Ntarya...
- 40 I.: Cyprien Ntaryamira.  
R.: Hmmh. Cyprien Ntaryamira and other people who accompanied him. As soon as they left there, then they immediately took care of (*baba barayirebeye*) Habyalimana's plane. I want to tell you how genocide (*itsembabwoko*) [lit. exterminating a clan] started. That's right. So, they had
- 45 just left. I don't know the time because the following day, I heard that Kinani [Habyalimana] died the previous night. They said: "he died last night."  
I.: Hm  
R.: Yes, that is, we are remote village people.
- 50 I.: By the way, what is the meaning of Kinani?  
R.: They called him Kinani<sup>5</sup>, apparently because they realized that he had stayed in power for a long time.  
I.: [Laughter].  
R.: So, in short, in short, to cut a long story short... what I did during the
- 55 genocide?  
I.: No, just continue, that is what I want [to hear].  
R.: That is what you want? Eehh... I was going to cultivate in the valley. I was going to cultivate in the valley then, well... On April 6 in the evening during a very dark night, I heard explosions on the hill next to where I was.
- 60 But we already knew that RPF was fighting in the northern part of the country. We heard explosions like "Pii! Pii!!" while fires were set at the same time among our neighbors [Tutsi] who were our relatives. We intermarried, we got our wives from them and what not [what haven't we done?]. We failed to understand what was happening. Based on the fact that

65 I saw the 1959 war, even if it took place [happened], the killings that took place cannot be compared to those killings [in 1994]. I didn't even see people fleeing in 1959. People did not die. People fled. They [Tutsi] took refuge in churches, for example Save. They returned to the remote villages (*ibyaró*) in their houses. No people died. Others fled to Burundi, Zaire, Tanzania, Really, no people died!

70 I.: Even then ?  
R.: They [Hutu] were setting Tutsi's homes on fire. So, what happened after, we saw houses set on fire and the way they were exploding, people fled. We said: "59 is back!" We all fled with fear, whether Tutsi or Hutu,

75 and our children. It was the harvesting season for sorghum (*itumba ry'amasaka*). We went to hide in the forests, in the sorghum fields (*imibyuko y'amasaka*), in the bush where we stayed overnight being bitten by mosquitoes. We stayed there throughout the night. At dawn, around 4:00 a.m., it became clear to us. They said: "we are looking for so and so,"

80 However, we failed to make sense of the situation. Even if it happened, we are not the ones who did it! The top officials did it. The top officials. You know that the commune must have its own police staff who are in charge of security. These are the ones who used to work [kill] and others were appointed. The so called... I don't know what they called them. They

85 appointed themselves. I mean it is their own program. Me, I didn't know it. Well, the events continue. For me to commit the sin [kill someone], I did it after the war had already started on June [sic] 6th 1994. But me, I committed the sin at the very end.  
I.: I guess you are going to tell me how you did it.

90 R.: I committed the sin on May 26. You understand that the whole month had passed. What was the cause? It was caused by ... They kept on shouting at me saying: "Look at this guy." They said: "look, this and that..." They said: "from now onwards, the "Conseiller" (Counselor) the one who was a "Conseiller," whether you are conseiller... from the

95 Conseillers" to *Responsables*.... "Just now," he said, "people killed at the home of so and so. Nobody hid anyone." Because we used to hide people. Even my mother-in-law, as my mother-in-law as such, they took her from us and took her with them. We don't know where they took her.  
I.: You married a ... Is your mother-in-law Tutsi (*Umutsikazi*, lit. Tutsi woman)?

100 R.: My mother-in-law ? Of course. My brother also got his wife from there<sup>6</sup>.  
I.: Hum  
I.: They suddenly went into our bedroom saying that after all, since they

105 were going to set fire to our house, why not lock it with a padlock. The keys were all together, so they took all of them out. They took her [the mother-in-law] with them to kill her. Well, if you paid money (*amafaranga*) they did not kill the person. The reason why I came to make that sin [kill] is that the Conseiller said: "those guys turned themselves into

110 'I don't want' (*ba nangaha*). Apparently they refuse to do what other people are doing." They [political authorities] said: "You go with so and so. Go with these kids." The "Responsible" and the *igitero* leader will show you where... He said: "Take the small boy to his home, to their houses [home]." They had just finished killing their uncles. ...

115 Yes, so I came to confess and also to plead guilty. I am part of those people who confessed--pleaded guilty. I came to ask for forgiveness. To ask for forgiveness from those kids. Yes<sup>7</sup>.  
I.: So, how did you kill him?  
R.: Listen to him! I had nothing. No stick, nothing. Other people used to

120 carry something with them... In fact, I had lost hope because I went out without carrying any weapon with me.  
I.: Hmmm  
R.: I killed him with a club that our leader (*chef*) had. Yes. I hit him with that club.

125 I.: Where?  
A.: Wherever I hit him, I hit with fear (*igihubuka*). He didn't die completely. I felt grief. I felt sad. I was a Christian, so it made me afraid. It made me afraid. Even then he did not die completely, so I suddenly left.  
I.: So, where did you hit him?

130 R.: In the head. Me, too when I remember that I feel like dying with grief.  
I.: Mhnh?  
R.: Good people died, man. Good people! Polite, well brought up people (*imfura*), with good social relationship, love [and] kindness. Ahaaa! (Gosh!).

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As both Interview One and Interview Two suggest, many of those who participated in the genocide were forced to do so. Unmotivated to kill their neighbors, relatives by marriage, friends, or complete strangers, these unlikely *genocidaires* were often persuaded to take part in the massacres by means of threats, rebukes, and sheer force. I call all of these “weapons” – whether physical, psychological, or rhetorical – “coercion.” The question to be asked, then, is how exactly were people coerced? What structures did they feel they could not escape?

One of the most striking aspects of my interviews with over one hundred Rwandan Hutu is the degree to which their stories resemble each other. The same words, ideas, narrative structures and framing devices come up again and again in the accounts of men, women, and even children. It is tempting to wonder if this is the result of these people having lived together in prison for six years, with plenty of time to discuss their actions and, consciously or unconsciously, to develop a kind of “master narrative” about what happened in 1994. If this were true, their accounts would serve less as a representation of the social realities of 1994 (or help to explain what led these people to participate in the killing), and more as a representation of the ideological processes at work in prison communities after the fact.

For this reason, I base my conclusions less on the surface, or referential, content of the perpetrators’ stories, and more on the less easily manipulated discursive contours of their statements. I hope to show, based on an analysis of these discursive issues, that the lowest level participants in the genocide portray a common set of circumstances that almost guaranteed their participation. Use of a common discursive frame enables them to make sense of it to themselves in the aftermath.

These two issues – the means of coercion, and the discursive frame for interpreting it – turn out to be semantically related. They both derive from the Kinyarwanda verbal root – *tera*, which can be glossed as “attack.” One derivation of this root is *igitero*, (pl. *ibitero*), which can be found in line 40 of Interview One and in line 112 of Interview Two. Again and again, in describing particular episodes of killing, interviewees told me that they had taken part in *ibitero* or group attacks. “*Igitero*” thus denotes a group of people who are assembled to wage an attack. In military terms, *guteru* means “to wage war.” In the context of the perpetrators’ accounts, “*igitero*” points to a form of social and political organization that actually facilitated the attacks on Tutsi. This form of

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organization was not new, and it is useful to understand it historically before exploring its significance in 1994.

In traditional Rwandan society, a number of signals were used to alert the community to dangers, such as being attacked (*guterwa*). When a person is attacked, she or he shouts for help (*gutabaza*) and those who live on the same hill or hamlet are socially and morally obligated to come to the person's aid (*kumutabara*).<sup>8</sup> This is the oldest known form of *igitero*, a group response to a situation of danger (Kagame 1959). But more recently, it has taken other forms.

In 1959, following an assault on a Hutu sub-chief named Dominique Mbonyumutwa by Tutsi members of UNAR (*Union Nationale Rwandaise*) in Gitarama on November 1, "riots" or *ibitero* [plural of *igitero*] spread through the country. Hutu burned Tutsi houses, killed their cattle and forced many thousands to flee in fear for their lives. Tutsi who lived through the 1959 experience who remained in Rwanda claim that humiliating and killing Tutsi never stopped from then on. For example:

"MDR- *Parmehutu* started killings in '59, in collaboration with their colonial patrons. Habyarimana's hypocrisy can be compared to the one in '59 when they used Mbonyamutwa. *Parmehutu* started killing from then, they destroyed houses, they burned, they stole, they looted, and they took domestic animals, houses and land. From 1959 until 1973, MDR never stopped killing Rwandans because they were Tutsi. It became like victory praise from President Kayibanda down to the lowest commoner. A person who wanted a good reputation insulted *Gatutsi* (Tutsi); he could even sentence him or her [Tutsi] to death and that could earn that person a higher position" (*Imboni* 1996:7).

As a chronic form of violence against Tutsi, *igitero* has been misidentified as spontaneous rioting and as selective political violence, when, in fact, it has a recognizable history as a mechanism of organizing group attacks dating back to 1959.

Newbury correctly points out that the *ibitero* of 1959 were spurred on by rumors that a Hutu sub-chief, Mbonyumutwa, was assaulted by a gang of Tutsi youths. The rumors that he had been killed "instantaneously sparked rural uprisings in several parts of the country: gangs of Hutu roamed the countryside chasing out Tutsi inhabitants and burning houses" (Newbury 1998:13). It is an understatement, however, to assert that the violence targeted only chiefs, sub-chiefs and members of the Tutsi aristocracy at the beginning.

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From the period of the First Republic up to 1994, this practice of *igitero* was used not to assist people under attack, but rather to assemble the attackers themselves. The whistles (*induru*) previously used to call for help (*gutabaza*) from neighbors were transformed into harbingers of impending destruction. *Ibitero* became transformed into groups of attackers (numbering anywhere from 20-100 people) who set out to strike terror into their victims. This is the sense of the term that emerges from the perpetrators' accounts. According to a written statement by one of them:

On April 12, 1994, I came with Bayingana and Bizimana from Cellule Mwendo to visit our sister because they had told us that she was sick – she was in labor. We left around 9:00 after she delivered. When we arrived at Sector Bwisha, we met with an *igitero*, which was coming from Busengo. Busengo had been attacked the previous night. People in *that igitero (icyo gitero)* asked us: “Where is Bernard’s house for they told us that there are some Tutsi.” We told them that with the Bernard we knew, there were no Tutsi living there. When we told them that, they hit Bayingana with a stick on his hand. They wounded him and blood flowed (*amaraso irasesa*). When we saw that things were serious (*ibintu bikomeye*), we took them to Bernard’s house where they wanted to go. When we arrived there, one of the people who made up *that igitero (icyo gitero)* was Mutima, I don’t remember his [other] name. They asked Bernard: “Give us the Tutsi who are here.” He replied to them: ‘I have no Tutsi’ except his nephews who were at his mother’s place – two girls and one boy – Muyango’s children.

We went up to Bernard’s mother. When we arrived there, they told that elderly woman: ‘Give us the Tutsi you are hiding. She told them [*igitero* members] that she had no Tutsi except her grand-children who are here. They told her: ‘bring them.’ She brought them. After she brought them, people who were in *that igitero (icyo gitero)* from Gakenke, asked us “Are these children Tutsi?” We told them that they were Hutu. They said ‘but why do they look Tutsi?’ We told them that their mother was a Hutu. They [*igitero* members] told the mother of those children called Agata: ‘Now that they tell us that they belong to you, at this point we can’t just leave like that. You have to give us one thousand Francs to spend on drinks or if you don’t give it to us, we are going to kill them one way or another (*byanze bikunze*). Agata told them: ‘I have no money.’ *That igitero (icyo gitero)* immediately herded them [children] saying that they were going to kill them at Kalima place.

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We left and after about a hundred meters near Kagabo's place, Agata brought 500 Francs. She gave that money but they told her that unless it was exactly 1000 Francs they would not let them [children] go. After we walked a short distance, she brought another 500 Francs to make it up one thousand. They let all the children free and they went back to their grand-mother's place. After their departure, *that igitero (icyo gitero)* took all the 1000 Francs. They took it and we went home. They did not give us any Francs.<sup>9</sup> That is what happened. After the war, all those [people] including Bernard and those girls and their mother, immediately accused me because they saw me in *that igitero (icyo gitero)* which came to their place. I was imprisoned (Confessor's written statement made 01.10.2000. Ruhengeri Prison. Given to me on September 27, 2000. Translated from Kinyarwanda).

How are these groups assembled in practice, and how did this institution fit into existing administrative and political structures in Rwanda? As it turns out, the lowest levels of Rwanda's administrative structure lent themselves perfectly to the assembly of small groups of attackers. Although the system was centralized in order to assure maximum control at every administrative level, I will only describe the mechanisms of control that operated at the lowest level, the Cell. From the beginning of the twentieth century, each hill, each neighborhood with a population of 50 to 100 families, each public institution, each school, and later, each private enterprise with at least 30 "militants" [party members] was considered a *Cellule* (Cell) of the *Mouvement* (Article 61 of MRND statute in Nkunuzumwami 1996).

Five elected committee members [representatives] managed each Cell for a period of five years and the head of each institution mentioned above was supposed to be the leader of the Cell. The committee, besides working with the security services in controlling the cell members, was in charge of organizing community development works, a type of forced labor introduced throughout the Belgian-ruled territories and here called *umuganda* in which every citizen had to participate. The cell leader was supported by the party leader for that area (*nyumba kumi*,<sup>10</sup> "ten houses" in Swahili). The *nyumba kumi* was in charge of ten households, the second-lowest administrative level in the country, helped by a five-member committee (the lowest level being the cell). "*Kugaba igitero*" (to give orders) was a term used to organize the attacking mobs. This was mostly the job of the *nyumba kumi*. In this way, *ibitero* became a kind of offshoot of a wider strategy of mass political and labor mobilization devised in

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1973 by Habyalimana's ruling party MRND (*Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Développement*). Members of MRND called "*Militants*" were supposed to maintain maximum control over the population and to carry out the party's ideology at the local level.

The mobilization of *ibitero* started at this level, as my interviews reveal.

One speaker said:

The death of the people who were killed in *Cellule* Bunyangezi [he lists 3 names]: All those people belonged to the same family as Nyiranshabari mentioned earlier. She was killed by an *igitero* that came from the Secteur of Ruhinga II. They met her in *Cellule* Nyarubuye. They hit her, and finally thought that she was dead, so they left. They went to look for her daughter who got married in *Cellule* Bunyangezi. When the woman realized that her killers had left, she followed them in order to see if they were killing her daughter. [But] when they found out that she had followed them, they killed her in Bunyangezi. *Conseiller* Mihigo is the one who ordered people to bury her. Those *ibitero* can be named by Mihigo who saw people coming from other areas and came to kill the people under his jurisdiction. (Interview in Ruhengeri Prison, August 2000).

Another interviewee gave this description of an *igitero* using the term "bush clearing" for the violence:

In the morning on April 10, 1994, I woke early in the morning because there was a law that ordered us to hunt for the enemy wherever they might be. People were also clearing bushes. We, [he lists 48 persons] and many others... I can't remember [all their] names... joined another *igitero*, which had already reached the Bar. We heard people shouting that they had caught some *inyenzi* [cockroaches, i.e. Tutsi]. The people shouted out that we should go up to the school building. When we reached the school, we found out that Mulererwa, the son of Rugambiza, was already dead but his children and sisters were still alive, but a certain Mulererwa had just been buried. I then saw Gakwisi, alias Nzibahava and Burakeye. Ngendahayo and Bajyagahe abruptly started killing those children with their mother. When they finished, they told us: 'you who were afraid of killing, now bring hoes and bury them.' They got hoes from the house of Cyiyendeye. We buried them and then went home (Interview in Ruhengeri Prison, August 2000).

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The result of involving everyone in the killings, whether directly or indirectly, was that all of them were made to feel equally complicit. Those who blew the whistles, those who attacked with clubs, hoes, machetes, as well as those forced to bury the dead, or contribute their agricultural implements, became part of the carnage.

From April 12, 1994, seven o'clock in the morning, I saw people descending a hill called Batambuka. When they reached the road below, some stayed there, and others continued up to the market called Rwungu. I saw them herding a man called Nyilingabo from his mother-in-law's up the road. Among the people I could recognize were Kanyamibwa.... They took him down towards Busengo and when they reached the market with him, that is where they killed him. Another man came down from Gatondo. He had a dagger, and he participated in killing him. Minani was carrying an iron bar, which he used to repair houses, and he admitted it himself because apparently Nyilingabo owed him 150 Rwandan francs (US \$1). After killing him, a man called Appolinaire blew a whistle in order to mobilize people to come and bury him. The hoes we used to bury him came from Desire but also a woman who was passing by on her way to dig potatoes gave us a hoe. Those who buried Nyilingabo are the following [he lists 5 participants] and others whose names I can't remember. (Interview in Ruhengeri Prison, August 2000).

Another confessor states what she witnessed:

On April 10, 1994, between 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. I heard yells echoing from the home of my mother [she mentions her name]. Since they had the habit of invading the place saying that they hid Tutsi; they also came to my place every hour, day and night, under the pretext that my sister was married in a Tutsi family [she mentions her name]. Then I heard a person screaming (*aboroga*), so I went to see what happened. When I arrived there, I met a person called Karangwa. They had hit him with a **club** but he was still in the process of dying (*yarasambaga*). Mudakikwa was there with a **club** and a round machete [traditional **machete** with a curved blade, like this: ?].

I was afraid because they were always looking for me. Karangwa was lying down groaning while others were on top of him at the edge of the courtyard....They were boasting saying that now that they found



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Karangwa, they would eat and sleep well because they had failed to find him [before]. Since I knew well who they were, I immediately asked for help because I could do nothing to them. Kamiya who was the member of the Cell is the one who came to help me (Statement dated 01.10.02 from Ruhengeri Prison, September 2000).

Thus, organizing people into attack mobs was an effective means of requiring forced assent to collective violence. The same mobilization strategy was later used to convince the Hutu population to flee to Goma, Zaire, as the Rwandan Patriotic Front advanced from the north in July 1994. Across the border in the Zairian refugee camps, entire Cells, Sectors and Prefectures were reconstructed under the control of the same officials who had brought their populations with them (Prunier 1995:204).

In its very literal sense, then, perpetrators refer to *ibitero* to indicate the death squads that carried out killings under the orders and supervision of agents of the state's administrative structures. None of my one hundred and ten informants talked about participating in the genocide in any way other than as part of an *igitero*. This could possibly be a discursive strategy used to deflect responsibility for actions taken through personal initiative, rather than under group pressure. However, I did not find this to be the case. *Ibitero* was not simply a stock story. The ninety-two informants who gave accounts of their participation in *ibitero* did so in great detail, naming times, places, and other participants. Even those 18 who did not themselves take part in *ibitero* volunteered accounts of *ibitero* they witnessed. This institution of social and political control was *the* central mechanism in the violence perpetrated by the lowest level of participants in Rwanda.

What does this mean in terms of Mamdani's statements about fear, or other, more general theories of collective violence, for that matter? As I stated above, fear of being killed was a motivating factor for ordinary Hutu who participated in the killing. It was not fear of an approaching threat, or even automatic obedience to local power. It seems obvious from their own statements that their fear of immediate injury – physical, political, social – at the hands of local leaders already in power (i.e. other Hutu) was at least as great as, if not greater than their supposedly natural propensity for obedience (as Prunier argues) or fear of a future restored Tutsi monarchy, or domination at the hands of the RPF (as Mamdani suggests). The ability of the local political apparatus to mobilize its "militants" for the purposes of attacking neighboring Tutsi presented a very real form of coercion, one that may deny ordinary people

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a certain degree of agency, but, in the end, that's what coercion amounts to, and there was no shortage of it in Rwanda in 1994.

## Responsibility for Killing

In addition to being a mechanism for mobilizing groups to action in the Rwandan administrative structure, *igitero* relates to a semantic field associated with hunting. In order to understand the genocidal process in Rwanda, it is important to understand the use of hunting terms in relation to the narratives of the killers.

In the pre-colonial era, the Rwandan monarch was the supreme authority in charge of regulating the natural environment through hunting. He ritually opened the hunting season each year, in which he himself participated, and delegated the power to hunt certain animals at certain times to the local authorities, including heads of families. Regulating hunting was one of the King's ritual duties because he was believed to be not only the ruler of the people, but also the ruler of nature in his kingdom. Thus, the King sanctioned the hunters' actions in a moral, spiritual, and political sense (Nkulikiyinka 1993).

As we can see in the interview excerpts below, those who participated in the genocide often refer to their actions by using hunting metaphors. These include the use of words like *kuvuza induru* (yell, as though in a hunt/bellow), *kwiwisha* (to stalk), *kuvumbura* (flush out of hiding), *gushorera* (to herd wild animals together), *guhiga* (to hunt or chase), and *kwichira ku gasi* (kill in full view), and of course *gutera* (to attack). The following written statements from confessors in Ruhengeri prison are representative of such a discourse.

When we reached Matemane's house, we met many people who then said that they should **hunt for the enemy in the bush** (*bagomba guhiga umwanzu mu bihuru*). So we divided ourselves into teams and we scattered everywhere. When I arrived behind Nyirambari's house, I was with Kazitunga when we heard **shouts echoing** from the hills (*induru zivugira hejuru ku misozi*) near Kamanzi's house saying 'you people down there come up because we have **flushed out the enemy**' (*nimuze twavumbuye umwanzu*). (Statement dated 01.10.02 from Ruhengeri Prison, September 2000)

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After a short time, they asked, ‘where can we find a good local beer (*inzoga*)?’ Three people whose names I don’t know who were on the spot said, ‘go to Bizimana’s place.’ When we reached Bizimana’s place, they ordered two beers (*ibyeri*) and one local beer (*urwagwa*) for me. As I was drinking it, a messenger (*intumwa*) came to announce that they saw a certain *inyenzi* (cockroach). They said to that person who came, I don’t know his name: ‘so, where did you see him/her?’

That person told them that he saw that *inyenzi* in a house. I was listening at that time. Then they asked him, ‘do you know any person that can bring her/him here?’ We then crossed the road. We walked and when we arrived at the next hill, a certain man called Mutabaruka arrived. They asked him, ‘why are you sweating, man?’ He replied, ‘we have brought one *inyenzi* and there are many others whose names I don’t know. The people I managed to know were (he lists 5 persons).’ Then the soldiers asked, ‘do you know that *inyenzi*?’ Then the soldiers said, ‘so if you know that *inyenzi*, kill him/her.’ They all hit that *inyenzi* with big sticks at the same time then the *inyenzi* died.

After that *inyenzi*’s death, they **flushed out** another *inyenzi* from where s/he was **hiding** (*kwihiha*). Some buried the first *inyenzi*, and the rest ran after the second *inyenzi* and killed her/him. Then the soldiers said to me, ‘come on, let us go.’ The second *inyenzi* that they **flushed out** is called Fidele the son of Karangwa. Those who ran after him were so mixed that I did not manage to know their names (Statement dated 01.10.02 from Ruhengeri Prison, September 2000).

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When we reached the top of the hill near Nzaboninka’s place, for we were all from the hill, Gakenke and Nsengimana said, ‘there are some *inyenzi* in the forest’ (*hali inyenzi mw’ishyamba*). You know that people used to call us forest dwellers (*abanyeshyamba*). Immediately, (he lists 10 persons) soon understood and jumped in the air. When we arrived in the forest, we found out that, that *inyenzi* went to **hide in the cave** (*kwihiha m’ukokwe*). The people in Muryowa over the next hill in Cellule Kirabo **bellowed** (*bavuzza induru*), so (he

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lists 3 people) went to bring him/her [*inyenzi*]. When I [he mentions his name], reached my field, I went to bring some grass. After getting some grass, I crossed over and joined them because we had a plan to **hunt down** *inyenzi* (*guhiga inyenzi*) in order to kill them. On my way, I passed by Birahinda's place where I found that woman, called Mukandida, had been beaten and she was **dying** (*gusamba*). I met Nzaramba and other persons digging the grave. When they finished digging the grave, we buried her (Statement dated 01.10.02 from Ruhengeri Prison, September 2000).

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The use of hunting metaphors in the genocide discursively likens the killing of Tutsi to the process of environmental culling or sanitation that the King sanctioned in traditional Rwanda. (The use of the term “cockroaches” for Tutsi is in a similar genre.) Successive regimes had, in fact, likened the extermination of Tutsi to the elimination of dangerous animals from the environment. The discourse of hunting, closely tied to *igitero*, helped establish a purpose for killing, a justification for a degree of brutality that has no place in human society, and a way to avoid personal responsibility for the killing: Thus, when ordered to kill, it was not human beings they were ordered to kill: “*Let no snake [Tutsi] escape you*” (*Ntihagire inzoka ibacika*). Not even a baby, they argued, because a child of a snake is also a snake (*Umwana winzoka ni inzoka nawe*) (Mugesera's speech in Kabaya in 1992). In some cases, the comparison was more literal than metaphorical. During the genocide, hunting specialists, especially Twa, were ordered to use hunting dogs to track Tutsi down and flush them out of the bushes where they were hiding, just as they might have hunted antelope on the King's orders. The choice of weapons used by *ibitero* – machetes, spears, and clubs – were also identical to those used for hunting wild animals. A witness's account is more revealing:

Tutsi ran away from their houses because they were afraid of being killed and hid in churches thinking that nobody would dare follow them there. That is not what happened. Killers met them there and killed them with machetes. They attacked them with spears (*babatera amacumu*), they threw grenades at them (*babatera za gerenade*) and stones. People who hid in the churches were thirsty and hungry; and they did not have enough air to breathe because they were crowded. Because of this situation, some went out running and *Interahamwe* ran after them until they killed them. Some

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hid in bushes, sorghum fields, in ditches, in caves. Those ones were **hunted down** (*barabahigaga*) and they even used **dogs** (*imbwa*) to **flush them out** (*kubavumbura*) and then killed them (*bakabica*). In addition, those who were caught were asked names of other people who hid with them while beating them because they had lists of those who were not yet killed. It was a very hard time (*byali bikomeye*)... Sometimes they cut down bushes, sorghum and banana trees **hunting down** Tutsi who were apparently hiding there (Interview with Augustin, genocide survivor from Byumba, January 2002).

I do not wish to suggest that those who participated in the killing of Tutsi in 1994 experienced the violence as though it was a hunting expedition, though that is possible. I am suggesting, however, that by narrating their stories to me in these terms, they are consciously or unconsciously framing their actions as though they were sanctioned by the highest authorities in the land, perhaps even good for the wider society, certainly part of a broad political process, even though coercion was central to it. On a discursive level at least, those people forced to participate in the genocide transformed themselves into hunters in pursuit of dangerous animals. As for the victims (their prey), they too, often felt dehumanized to the extent that they accepted that it was their fate to be killed.<sup>11</sup> This discursive feature of the perpetrators' stories elides a different aspect of Rwandan hunting traditions, which makes it taboo to hand an animal seeking refuge in someone's compound over to its pursuers (Nkulikiyinka 1993). Tutsi tried to seek refuge in traditional places, such as churches, but were unsuccessful in attempting to exploit such spaces of symbolic safety, and were in fact killed en masse in the very places such as churches, schools and official buildings that had served as sanctuaries from mob violence in the past. This was a new and more totalitarian development, not traditional or spontaneous.

There are many discursive strategies available to avoid responsibility for one's actions (see especially Hill and Irvine 1992). The use of hunting metaphors in the perpetrators' stories about how they participated in killing innocent people is only one that I found in reviewing their responses to my questions. As the transcripts above show, it took respondents a relatively long time to admit and describe the actual act of killing another person, and when they did so, they often spoke about themselves in the third person,<sup>12</sup> used euphemisms,<sup>13</sup> and referred frequently to the fact that they were under intense pressure to take part in the violence, implying that they would not have done so otherwise.

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Understanding the mechanisms and the discursive associations of *igitero* helps illustrate how these people understand and frame their own actions. The issue of responsibility becomes a tricky one, as “command responsibility” in the case of genocide can partially absolve those who wield the physical weapons against the victims. Many *avoues* said things like: “so, what do you think I could do?” (*wagirango se mbigire nte?*), “I could not do otherwise” (*ntako nalikubigira*), “I had no choice but save myself” (*nariguze*). The next section, explores further the perpetrators’ understandings of the specific crimes they committed. But even if they were attempting to evade responsibility, it is clear that they felt part of a structure that amounted to something much larger than the mere aggregation of their individual interests.

### Local Understandings of “Genocide”

For the most part, the perpetrators spoke to me in flat, unemotional voices, without any trace of remorse, even when relating scenes of severe violence. This lack of affect has also been noted by anthropologists in interviews with alleged perpetrators in the refugee camps in Zaire (DRC) and Tanzania (Janzen 2000; Sommers 1996). In addition to showing no remorse, this lack of affect can also be a sign of grief, of post-traumatic stress, or other psychological states. The flat tone together with the third person the speakers frequently used in their stories suggests distancing devices rather than complete lack of sentiment. What emerges overall, though, is how ordinary these killings seem to the perpetrators and how casually the speakers still seem to regard their participation in them. On the face of it, this does not suggest they were horrified by these acts and had to be coerced into killing. But it does suggest that these local perpetrators did not set out to commit *genocide*.

One of the most striking things I found in listening to the stories was the recurrent use of terms in Kinyarwanda that do not correspond well with the French or English terms one might expect to hear in such accounts. For example, in response to my question about what they had pleaded guilty to, all the *avoues* (“confessors”) confirmed that they had pleaded guilty to the crime of “*genocide*” (using the French word). When I asked them what “*genocide*” was, the majority told me that it was *ubwicanyi* (“killings”). Very few of the prisoners used the terms *itsembatsemba* or *itsembabwoko* (*itsemba* = extermination, *ubwoko* = clan/tribe), which are common Kinyarwanda

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translations for “genocide.” This suggests that there is little if any understanding on the part of the perpetrators of the legal, moral, or political differences between committing genocide – the attempt to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group – and simply committing murder. By exploring the apparent motivations for killing, and the circumstances in which most of these ordinary peasants took part in the killing, it is hard, in fact, to conclude that they possessed any degree of intent to wipe out all Tutsi, as such.

In this context, it is no wonder that most perpetrators do not relate their actions to the international legal concept “genocide.” And just as there have been numerous episodes of organized anti-Tutsi violence in the form of *ibitero* in Rwanda since 1959, there is a reason to argue that the potential for *igitero* did not end with 1994. In local terms, then, *igitero* is still a part of the social and political fabric of Rwandan society, and could certainly result once again in a massive loss of life. This is a cautionary note to those who would see the Rwandan genocide in bounded legal terms, starting and ending in 1994. If one listens to the actual words of the participants, a different picture of events emerges, one which is, in many ways, much more alarming. The cultural structure remains in place, one that could again be mobilized by a genocidal regime, as a terror tactic against both victims and participants.

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is adapted from the author's PhD dissertation entitled *Social and Political Mechanisms of Mass Murder: An Analysis of Perpetrators in the Rwandan Genocide*. Yale University 2004.

<sup>2</sup> As many as 75,000 to 150,000 Hutu took part in the genocide (Smith 1998:743-753, quoted in Waller 2002: 14). Over 300 murders per hour were committed mostly against Tutsi, but also including 50,000 Hutu government opponents. That is, more than 5 lives per minute (Waller 2002:234).

<sup>3</sup> The poor, rural sick are carried to distant health centers in a sling made from a blanket tied between two poles. Given the distances and the difficulty of carrying heavy loads over hilly terrain, this is a tangible sign of neighborly concern. As is the contribution to funerals mentioned first.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that in 1959, when the first massacres of Tutsi occurred, Hutu politicians referred to the killing as “wind,” meaning that attacking Tutsi came abruptly, and from nowhere, like wind. It passed like it came, abruptly and without reason. In other words, this metaphor amounts to a denial of organized massacres, not unlike the euphemistic references to “*événements*” (events), or “*jacquerie*” in comparison with the “peasant uprising” in the Isle de France in 1358 as propagated by the Colonial Ministry of Information (1960:22-72). Prunier (1994:41) talks about the 1959 *muyaga* that Rwandans call “disturbances.” For most Tutsi victims and survivors of the 1959 mass killings, interviewed in 1995 and 2000, it was “genocide without CNN cameras.”

<sup>5</sup> Kinani, from the verb *kunanira*, to be tough and hard to change or defeat, literally means “invincible.” In a public MRND political party meeting, Habyalimana declared his fame (*ikivugo*) as *Ikinana*. He adopted this

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designation as part of a praise-name that he bestowed upon himself: *Ikinani cyananiye abagome n'abagambanyi*, meaning “The Invincible One whom opponents and traitors failed to defeat.” Several comments will explain the joke. First, the prefix – *iki* is a morpheme usually demoting a thing, not a person, but here it is used to denote an extraordinary person. In this sense *ikinani* implies a bull, and is used by Habyalimana to show that he was super-human because of his strength. His boasting about his power in this way could be turned into derision. After Habyalimana allowed a multi-party system (democratization) in the 1990s, the mass media had relatively greater freedoms, so the written media chose another meaning of the term “*ikinani*”: “tough, excessively difficult (impossible), and disrespectful of social norms,” in order to ridicule him. They suggested that he was *kwivuga yirarira* (blowing his own trumpets). *Ikinani* has yet another connotation. Oral tradition has it that Kigwa (Gihanga), the mythical founder of Rwanda, landed at the place called Urutare rw'Ikinani (Ikinani's Rock) in Mubari, in the north-east. President Habyalimana thus rhetorically counted himself among the ancient rulers of Rwanda (Semujanga 2003, personal communication, also public knowledge in Rwanda).

<sup>6</sup> “there” in this line means “the same place,” meaning the same family. His emphasis indicates his realization that because the woman was doubly his affine, she was therefore a person whom he was supposed to look after and protect. One powerful tool of the genociders was to make people kill their own relatives, making them into transgressors bound together by their heinous deeds.

<sup>7</sup> Here, the respondent is explaining that he killed after being accused of non-participation by the *Conseiller* (Sector leader). He points out that it was the Cell leader (*Responsible*) and the *igitero* leader who told people whom to kill. The Cell leader told the respondent to take home the children whose uncles had just been killed. In his confession, he asked forgiveness from those children.

<sup>8</sup> This is the “whooping,” or traditional distress signal, that implied a responsibility to help, which a Rwandan told Gourevitch in his own way: “You hear it, you do it too. And you came running... No choice. You must. If you ignored this crying, you would have questions to answer” (Gourevitch 1998:34).

<sup>9</sup> Many of my informants told me that they had to pay money to Interahamwe who came to search for Tutsi hidden in their homes. African Rights reported on

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victims who paid money to be shot rather than being hacked to death by machetes.

<sup>10</sup> Cell leaders were supported by the party leader for that area commonly called *Nyumba kumi* (Swahili) copied from the Tanzanian Ujamaa socialist system where they are actually called *Nyumba kumi kumi* (every 10 houses). The *nyumba kumi* was called the *Responsable* (French). Cell authorities were initially known as *Abakangurambaga* (those who mobilize the mass population) or *Animateurs politiques* who deal with basic activities for the people. The system of *Nyumba kumi* had a Cambodian equivalent known as *dop khnong* (“ten houses”) (Ben Kiernan, personal communication, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Several survivors have told me that they didn’t resist their attackers because they felt they were already dead. “*Twapfuye duhagaze*” (lit. we were dead standing), that is, “we were walking dead,” or zombies. In other words, as a result of the process of dehumanization of Tutsi in Rwanda, many people felt that their fate was inescapable because their ethnicity was inescapable. Others were able to organize resistance to their attackers (e.g. in Bisesero). Organization seems to have been the key to resistance.

<sup>12</sup> Gitarama Prison (September 29, 2000): “*Baturoshyemwo* = they pushed us into it [genocide]; “*Dushorera abantu baricwa*” = we herded people who were then killed; “*Twinjijwe muli jenoside*” (= we were made to enter into genocide).

<sup>13</sup> Kigali Prison (September 20, 2000): “*Nakoze icyaha* = I committed the sin,” “*Ninjiye mu cyaha*” = I got involved in the sin; “*Narakoreshejwe*” = I was used; “*Nirereze gufatanya icyaha*” = I confessed for taking part in the sin).