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Mahmood Mamdani. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. xvi + 364 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-05821-4; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-691-10280-1.

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Reconciliation and Justice in Rwanda?

Ever since the world was shaken by the horrifying pictures of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, in which Tutsi and moderate Hutu were brutally murdered, many authors have tried to explain why and how the genocide occured. Ten years after this question is still not fully answered and debates in and outside Rwanda are continuing, in particular due to the forthcomming anniversary of the genocide in April 2004.

In *When Victims Become Killers* Mahmood Mamdani tries not simply to explain the mechanisms that made the genocide thinkable by parts of the Rwandan populations, but also to analyze possibilities and barriers for reconciliation. While most authors refer to economic or cultural explanations for the genocide, Mamdani explores another path by focusing on political explanations, in particular on identity politics, and on broadening the historical and geographical context.

Chapter 1 elaborates the theoretical background of the study. Mamdani differentiates between political, cultural, and market-based identities. He argues that political identities, which have been polarized through historical processes, are at the root of the racialization of the two main groups in Rwanda, the Hutu and the Tutsi. This racialization was a prerequisite for the genocide. Chapter 2 retraces the debates on the origins of Hutu and Tutsi identities. In pre-colonial Rwanda there was first a tendency to cultural integration from separate origins, then a counter-tendency to a political differentiation. Though belonging to a single cultural community, Hutu and Tutsi emerged as state-enforced political identities, underlying historical changes. During the expansion of the Rwandan state, various ethnic groups of the kingdom became Hutu, a transethnic identity of subjects of the state, while the Tutsi were an identity. Chapter 3 describes how the Hutu and Tutsi were racialized under colonialism. Tutsi were said to be Hamite cattle herders that migrated to Rwanda a few centuries earlier and subjugated the indigenous Bantu agriculturalists, the Hutu. In the 1920s, colonial administration shifted the authority from the king to the chiefs, reorganized their power and racialized local authority. As a consequence, state power became more despotic. Tutsi privileges were branded as alien privileges, thus defining Tutsi as an alien race and power holders. In chapter 4 Mamdani depicts the decolonization movement, in particular the 1959 "social revolution," as an internal social movement that empowered the Hutu majority, which had been constructed by colonial administration and missionaries as indigenous, against the Tutsi minority constructed as alien. This social movement was based on a Hutu counter-elite that had established itself in response to the fixation of Hutu and Tutsi, and opportunities to escape these through the emergence of a market-based economy and missionary education.

Chapter 5 focuses on the redefinition of Tutsi from race to ethnicity after the 1973 coup that brought Juvenal Habyarimana to power. Under Habyarimana, the Tutsi diaspora was excluded and deprived of their right to return, leading to the formation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) as a solidarity movement amongst Tutsi refugees worldwide. Chapter 6 is concerned with the invasion of the RPF in 1990. The RPF emerged in Uganda among the Tutsi diaspora, but quickly found support among the Tutsi diaspora of other countries. For Mamdani, the invasion was less a response to the developments in Rwanda than an outcome of developments in the region. No longer feeling welcome in their host countries and therefore seeing no prospects for their future, the Tutsi diaspora saw no other way than a forceful return to Rwanda.

Chapter 7 deals with the civil war and the genocide. The civil war from 1990 to 1994, that resulted from the RPF invasion, had a great impact on the radicalization of the regime and the population in Rwanda. Moveover, other factors contributed, too, including the forceful de-

mocratization leading to the emergence of political parties that quickly radicalized, economic constraints due to internal displacement, the fall of world market prices, the non-inclusion of radical Hutu parties in the Arusha talks, the murder of the first Hutu president in Burundi in 1993, and other events in Rwanda and the region–all these contributed to increasing tensions, culminating in the genocide.

Chapter 8 describes the events after the RPF seized power and particularly events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mamdani analyzes the citizenship crisis in both the Congo and Rwanda, rooted in land allocation practices, that resulted from the 1996 PF invasion of the Congo. In the process, the indigenous Kinyarwanda-speaking community became polarized in Hutu/Tutsi and identified with Rwandans. By way of conclusion, Mamdani tries to evaluate the political reforms necessary after the genocide that can lead to reconciliation, reduce the tensions in Rwanda, and prevent a repetition of the genocide. According to Mamdani, this can only be reached through a contextualization of the truth and a reconciliation with history. Further, this should be done through the recognition of the connection of genocide to the civil war and its regional dynamics. Also necessary will be a reinterpretation of history, including a re-examination of the question of power, of the complicity of history-writing with colonialism, and particularly a new analysis of the 1959 revolution. Mamdani concludes that there can be no reconciliation without a reorganization of power. Rwanda must now choose between two forms of justice. One choice would be a victor's justice, leading to the Tutsification of state institutions according to the principle "the winner takes all," yet the price would be a continuation of the civil war. Preferable would be a "survivor's justice" based on reform of the institutions of rule and focused on political reconciliation and political justice.

The book gives a broad view of the regional context and thus provides new insights into Rwandan history and the interpretation of the genocide. Influences from Ugandan and Congolese history are well described; it is therefore a pity that Burundian history is not dealt with in the same depth in a separate chapter. It is also regrettable that the only map of Rwanda in the book (p. 40) is not dated. Moreover, Rwandan culture and history is sometimes not described accurately. For instance, Mamdani writes that a wife takes the identity of her husband through marriage, which is wrong since neither clan nor ethnic identity can be changed through marriage (p. 53).[1] Another example is the statement that early church leaders were conservative, upper-class Flemish while newcomers were French-speaking reformists (p. 113). It is rather the opposite: from the 1940s Flemish-speakers that resented the Wallonian supremacy in Belgium started to identify with oppressed Hutu.[2] Some of these shortcomings might stem from Mamdani's lack of fluency in French, which he himself acknowledges (p. xii), a skill crucial for understanding the literature on the region. Generally however, this shortcoming does not invalidate his arguments and interpretations.

Mamdani's analysis of the political reforms after genocide as victor's justice is probably too extreme and has to be reviewed if one takes into consideration the processes initiated in the late 1990s in Rwanda. The influence of historical interpretations upon the Rwandan crisis is highly conspicuous in contemporary Rwanda. History teaching in schools has been suspended since 1994, but there are lively debates on which history to teach and how one should teach history, as well as about civic education in general. In the official discourse, bad governance is blamed as the main source of the crisis that led to genocide. A National Unity and Reconciliation Commission has been set up, whose aim is to evaluate and reinforce the level of reconciliation in the country, but also to fight divisionism in the administration. To deal with the over 100,000 presumed perpetrators of the genocide, local lay tribunals called *gacaca* have been set up. They are intended not only to judge the perpetrators, but also to reintegrate them back into society. Great efforts are made to resettle Rwandan refugees who are still living abroad. Finally, a constitution based on grassroots consultations was adopted in 2003. The first democratic elections in Rwanda since independence followed, paving the way for the rule of law. These elections installed an all-party system in which all elected parties take part in the government in a subtle form of power sharing, even though the RPF still dominates the political scene. On the other hand, some of the fears expressed by Mamdani, e.g. the fear of some Tutsi who believe that their survival is dependent upon them being in power, do still exist and most are explicit in the anti-divisionism focus in the new constitution. No group (ethnic, regional, religious, etc.) or individuals as members of a group can be favored or disfavored according to the constitution, but at the same time there is an implicit taboo on labelling Tutsi and Hutu. This creates an ambiguous situation that inhibits the open dialogue that would be necessary for the political reconciliation requested by Mamdani. Ten years after the genocide, it is still too early to tell if the motto "Never Again" will become true, but Mamdani gives valuable indicators by which to measure Rwanda's political development.

Mamdani's *When Victims Become Killers* aims at an audience of scholars and students interested in conflict management, identity politics, and ethnicity and is also highly recommended for policy makers. Until now, no single book has been written on post-genocide Rwanda that would serve as the single reference work, but if one has to recommend an assortment of complementary texts, *When Victims Become Killers* should be included.

Notes

[1]. Mamdani himself notices the contradiction, since he adds that in spite of this Tutsi wives of Hutu men were killed as Tutsi during genocide.

[2]. Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Deux Mille Ans d'Histoire* (Paris: Aubier 2000), p. 264.

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