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## RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN 1990–1993 AMONG THE RWA: SECESSION IN A LUTHERAN DIOCESE IN NORTHERN TANZANIA

CATHERINE BAROIN

FOLLOWING AN AGREEMENT between Germany and Britain in 1886, continental Tanzania (the former Tanganyika) fell under German domination during the early colonial era.<sup>1</sup> Ever since then the dominant cultural and social influence, on Kilimanjaro, as on Mount Meru to the west, remains that of the Lutheran church. From the end of the last century this church sent missionaries to Kilimanjaro, then to Mount Meru. Despite some initial setbacks, Lutheran evangelism rapidly became a huge success. At present, the Lutheran church is by far the most important church in this mountainous region of northern Tanzania.

Unlike many parts of independent Africa, Tanzania has been noteworthy for the absence of serious turmoil, but the Rwa population which occupies the slopes of Mount Meru distinguished itself from 1990 to 1993 by a conflict which opposed, within the Lutheran Church, the partisans of the clerical authorities and rebels desirous of secession. For some time, this conflict attracted the attention (and the blame) of the Tanzanian media to this little known ethnic group, of approximately 150,000 souls, called Meru in Tanzania.<sup>2</sup> In their language (*ki-rwa*), they call themselves the Rwa (*n-rwa* in the singular, *va-rwa* in the plural) and should not be confused with the Kenyan Meru, with whom they have no links whatsoever. The objective of the present article is to describe the main stages of this conflict among Lutherans, to analyse its causes, the social forces which came into play, and finally, the consequences of this conflict on the social life and institutions of the Rwa ethnic group. However, it is first necessary to outline the background to the main protagonists: the Tanzanian government and its special form of socialism; the Tanzanian Lutheran church; and through an overview of its main institutions, the Rwa ethnic group itself.

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1. John Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979).

2. Paul Puritt, 'The Meru of Tanzania: a study of their social and political organization' (Unpublished Ph.D. University of Illinois, 1970). Paul Puritt, 'The Meru of northeastern Tanzania', in Sally Falk Moore and Paul Puritt, *The Chagga and Meru of Tanzania* (International African Institute, Ethnographic Survey of Africa, 18, London, 1977), pp. 90–140.

*The background to the events*

i *Tanzania and the Tanzanian government.* The Tanzanian government played an active role in this conflict, however unintended. Its attitude was strongly marked by the socialist ideals of Julius Nyerere, who retains great prestige in present day Tanzania. This ideal is characterized by a will to self-reliance through mass education, free health care and the reduction of inequality. Education, given in kiSwahili in primary schools, has resulted in the generalization of this language spoken by almost everyone in Tanzania. The Swahili language unquestionably constitutes an important uniting factor in this country of more than one hundred and twenty different ethnic groups.<sup>3</sup> Democratic education was also firmly implanted: a large number of decisions are made and implemented by majority vote. In meetings, a quorum is ensured, after first having designated a chairman and a secretary. This procedure is illustrated in the unfolding of the conflict.

Tanzanian socialism also translates itself by a marked spirit of conciliation, which is expressed in the religious liberty inscribed in the constitution. This spirit of tolerance is also at the origin of the ideological battle against 'tribalism', considered a menace to general harmony. A poor view is taken of 'tribalism' in Tanzania, and the accusation of 'tribalism', of which there are examples below, is therefore particularly disparaging. However, 'tribes' have not disappeared in this country and the division by ethnic group is the implicit rule of the composition of parishes, Lutheran in particular.<sup>4</sup> While sermons are given uniquely in kiSwahili, liturgical hymns are sung sometimes in kiSwahili and sometimes in the local language (here ki-Rwa), in which Lutheran missionaries made a point of translating all religious texts.

The spirit of tolerance that reigns in Tanzania is also manifested, although over a shorter period, by the liberty of the press. Nonetheless, control of the media—which requires considerable financial means which most Tanzanians lack—remains the monopoly of the government, the party and the church. This situation, in the conflict that we are going to recount, worked to the detriment of the Lutheran secessionist group which, due to its lack of influence with the media, saw itself left to general disgrace.

It has to be noted that democratic education and the spirit of tolerance do not exclude Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) from having a very firm foothold, in spite of the recent introduction of multi-partism. This situation is not perceived as contradictory due to the broad based

3. Denis-Constant Martin, 'Le pouvoir en discussion. Etat, structures sociales et culture politique en Tanzanie' (University of Paris V, thèse pour le doctorat d'Etat es-lettres, 1987). Herman Batibo and Denis-Constant Martin (ed.), *Tanzanie—L'ujamaa face aux réalités* (Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, Mémoire no. 80, Paris, 1989).

4. M. Vahakangas, 'Etninen identiteetti kuohuttaa kirkkoa Tansaniassa', *Suomen Lähetysseuranomat* (Finland) 3 (1993), pp. 26–29.

recruitment of this party. The administrative organization of the country, for its part, is based on the territorial divisions inherited from colonialism where one distinguishes successively the region, the district, the ward and the village. The village itself used to be divided into cells, each grouping ten families and having at its head, an elected leader called 'ten cell leader' (*balози* in kiSwahili). Now villages are divided into sub-groups of 50 houses each. At each level of organization, there is a close link between government officials and party leaders.

Finally, it is important to stress that the socialist ideal, still characteristic of this country, goes hand in hand with the low level of development: general poverty (although northern Tanzania, the region that concerns us here, is the richest) and insufficient infrastructure are not unrelated to recurring accusations of corruption, of which this religious conflict supplies yet another example. General economic difficulties, unemployment, and juvenile delinquency, also leave their mark on the unfolding of events.

ii *The Lutheran church in Tanzania.* As indicated the Lutheran church is the longest established church in the Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru region of northern Tanzania. It is also by far the most powerful. It was in 1892 that the Lutheran Evangelical Mission of Leipzig was established in Kilimanjaro. In 1896, it sent two missionaries to the Rwa area of Akeri, but the Rwa, who feared the settlement of German colonialists, killed them on 18 October 1896. This dramatic beginning delayed Lutheran establishment in Rwa country for some years, but its long term effect was to strengthen the Lutherans' eagerness to evangelize and it without doubt contributed, by giving two martyrs to its cause, to the efficacy of their action.

The first Lutheran mission was established in 1902 at Nkoaranga, right in the heart of the Rwa country. In 1903, it was followed by two others at Akeri and Ngyani. In 1904, the first faithful were given baptism, then the evangelizing of the population further intensified, helped by the fact that Lutheran missionary activity did not limit itself to religious proselytism. Lutheran missionaries opened a children's school and gave medical care. The pupils worked in the mission coffee fields in the afternoons (it is then that coffee growing was introduced in Rwa country) and were paid wages of a shilling a month, a considerable sum at that time (given that an ox was worth only five shillings).<sup>5</sup> This financial measure rapidly attracted a certain part of the population to the missionaries, although the condemnation by the Church of some well anchored customs, such as polygamy and the drinking of alcohol, brought about long lasting resistance. Translation into ki-Rwa of Biblical texts and religious songs later

5. A. S. Mbise, 'The evangelist: Matayo Leveriya Kaaya', in John Iliffe (ed.), *Modern Tanzanians—a volume of biographies* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1973), pp. 27–42.

contributed to the solid establishment of the church. The New Testament, for example, was fully translated and published in ki-Rwa by the Lutheran Evangelical Mission of Leipzig in 1964.

Thus, the Lutheran church developed and organized itself, in Rwa country as in the rest of Tanzania.<sup>6</sup> In 1963 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania or the ELCT was formed from a fusion of seven independent churches. The number of dioceses increased with the number of the faithful. For example there was a former Northern Diocese which, in 1972, split into three now distinct dioceses: Pare, Arusha and Northern, this new (and smaller) Northern Diocese being the one which concerns us here. The secession in 1972 of the Arusha diocese from the then bigger Northern diocese did not occur without some difficulties: the separation took place before ratification by the church. There was thus, in some ways, a repetition of history in the Rwa secession battle that we are going to describe. However, in 1972, the Rwa chose not to split, but to stay within the Northern Diocese (a decision of the Executive Council of Meru district, which met at Akeri on 13 July 1972), composed of a majority of Chaga.<sup>7</sup> Since then, the Northern Diocese has been divided into six districts: Meru, Karatu, Hai West, Hai East, Central Kilimanjaro and West Kilimanjaro. In 1990, this diocese was made up of a total of 360,000 faithful, among whom about 20 percent were Rwa (83,000 faithful in Meru district). The other districts were populated mostly by Chaga.

The Meru district of the diocese, essentially inhabited by the Rwa, comprises thirty five parishes whose division does not totally correspond to the administrative subdivisions of the country. It is therefore difficult to compare the population figures of the last Tanzanian census (1988), with the number of faithful declared by the Lutheran church. Nevertheless, it is clear that in this region—even taking into account the most ethnically mixed areas in the town and in the plains—more than half of the population is affiliated to the Lutheran church. In Rwa country proper, on the south-eastern slopes of Mount Meru, the Lutheran church is by far the dominant one. Other Protestant churches have more recently been established: Baptist churches from 1966 and Pentecostals from 1968, grouping together far fewer numbers of followers.<sup>8</sup> But their influence is growing, especially as the conflict within the Lutheran Church caused many faithful to leave it for these rival churches.

The Lutheran church in Rwa country is not only important in number, its importance also stems from the fact that it controls nearly all the

6. C. K. Omari, 'Episcopacy, a sociological trend in the Lutheran Church in Tanzania', *Africa Theological Journal*, Makumira (Tanzania), 16 (1987), pp. 4–12.

7. Moore and Puritt, *The Chagga and Meru of Tanzania*.

8. S. E. Nnko, 'The interdenominational conflicts within the Meru district of the ELCT Northern Diocese' (Makerere University, unpublished diploma of theology, Archives of the Makumira Lutheran Theological College in Tanzania, 1980).

infrastructure. In fact, it not only possesses churches, fields and coffee plantations, which bring in considerable revenues, but it also manages the four secondary schools and the two training centres (the Leguruki Vocational Training School inaugurated in 1984, and the Usa River Rehabilitation Centre founded in 1991) as well as the only district hospital in Nkoaranga. The local population often takes care of the construction of the building, while the church takes care of the administration of the establishments, training teachers and the search for funds to buy educational or hospital materials as well as the equipment. Thanks to its international organization, the Lutheran church taps external aid, which is a precious contribution to the country. These funds enable it not to limit its work to the domains of education and health, but also to contribute to the financing of other development programmes, such as the water supply schemes of Akeri and Urisho. The impact of the Lutheran church is therefore not only religious, and without exaggeration we can say that in this region it constitutes a state within a state.

The all powerful church also distinguishes itself by the prestige its agents hold. The status of a pastor is envied and respected as much if not more than that of chief of the clan or generation, and the church can designate, without risk of rejection, those that it chooses for the profession of pastor. For those thus chosen, it pays the full five years of higher education. As for the bishop of the diocese, he is an eminent person of the first order. In this country where transport is a problem, his status is marked by the fact that just like a member of parliament, he travels in an air conditioned four wheel drive vehicle. This moral and social primacy of the Lutheran church in Rwa society explains how the conflict within the church came about as a cataclysm at the local level.

iii *The Rwa*. The Rwa are Bantu-speaking farmers, numbering about 150,000, who cultivate the south-eastern slopes of Mount Meru (4585 m) to the west of Kilimanjaro. The rich volcanic soil of these two rain-soaked mountains is favourable to intensive farming. Bananas and coffee (cash crop) predominate. While among the Chaga, settled on Kilimanjaro, bananas are the staple diet, among the Rwa maize seems to prevail over bananas. For the Rwa, beans constitute a second cash crop, and are included in the diet as are a number of other crops cultivated on a more limited scale. Furthermore, each family of this densely populated area breeds one or two milk cows as well as sheep and goats in stables and some poultry. Homesteads are dispersed.

Under the effect of demographic pressure, some Rwa settled, from the 1950's onwards, in the plains below the mountain to the south, as well as in the pastoral zone to the east of Mount Meru, where the drier climate and the less fertile soil create a different agricultural rhythm and living

conditions. To these agricultural resources, one can often add diverse occupations: craftsman, teacher, trader or a seasonal employment linked to tourism (driver, porter, guide), due to proximity to Arusha, the Tanzanian safari capital. But these activities, a frequent reason for absence, do not lead to a loss of identity: the Rwa are united by language and culture.

Historically, they are related to the Chaga Machame of Kilimanjaro, who like them, are said to be descendants of a group of mid seventeenth century migrants who travelled from the Usambara Mountains, 250 kms to the south-east. Some of these migrants settled on Mount Meru giving birth to the Rwa ethnic group (Rwa means 'who climbed'), while the others settled on Kilimanjaro and became the Machame, a Chaga group whose customs and language are very close to those of the Rwa. These two peoples, Chaga and Rwa, have many things in common; they operate in the same surroundings and on the whole share the same life style. However, the Chaga, made up of many different groups, outnumber the Rwa nine times over: in 1989 they numbered 700,000, while the Rwa were only 80,000 at this date.<sup>9</sup> Land pressure forced a large number of them to leave the slopes of Kilimanjaro for settlement in all areas of Tanzania. Unlike the Rwa, the Chaga are reputed for their business sense; on average they are more cosmopolitan, more educated and richer than the Rwa. The latter suffer an inferiority complex: indeed, this was one of the causes of the conflict.

A large majority of the Rwa are convinced and practising Lutherans. All of them know how to read, write and speak kiSwahili, the language of primary education. Those who know English, the language of secondary education, are much fewer in number. Ki-Rwa, the language of the Rwa, is still used, but it is subject to the very strong influence of kiSwahili, to the extent that young Rwa are ignorant of a number of words of everyday usage in their mother tongue. Under the growing influence of monotheism, of schooling and Swahilization, one would expect that the Rwa community would lose much of its identity. However, this is not the case: it preserves an unquestioned cultural unity, despite the rapid changes to which it has been subjected. Originally very influenced by Maasai customs that dominated this region when they settled there, as well as by those of the Arusha farmers of Maasai culture who from 1830 settled close to them on the south-western slopes of Mount Meru, the Rwa gradually kept their distance as regards this cultural model.<sup>10</sup> At the present time, they are organized in a socially and politically autonomous manner, of patrilineal clans whose role is predominant as regards land issues, and a generational

9. Gérard Philippon, 'Les populations', in Batibo and Martin *Tanzanie—L'ujamaa face aux réalités*, p. 43.

10. P. H. Gulliver, *Social Control in an African Society. A study of the Arusha: agricultural Masai of Northern Tanganyika* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963).

system which, with time, distanced itself from the Maasai system which it first imitated. Each nuclear family forms a distinct economic unit. The fields that it cultivates belong to the father of the family and are passed on along paternal lines. The patrilocal residence is built on the family farm and brothers are neighbours. As a general rule, women own neither land nor livestock, apart from some chickens. They carry out the larger part of agricultural work and participate very little in extra-familial social life, which is a male domain. Marriage partners are chosen outside of close relations, without evidence that any exchange system has been provided for.

The Rwa are made up of 18 patrilineal clans of unequal size, which are divided into diverse lineages and descendants and are found on the entire Rwa territory in varying concentrations according to the area. At the local level the members of the clan elect the chief, and local chiefs elect an overall chief for the clan. Patrilineal clans have the authority to sort out all land disputes (inheritance, boundary marking) and the consent of the clan is necessary in order to sell one's land to a person of another clan. Furthermore, members of a clan are linked by a certain material and moral solidarity which is manifest in family ceremonies (notably weddings and deaths), and in joint payment of the compensation in murder cases.

The clan system doubles as an age-set organization modelled on the Maasai system. Namely, the whole male population is divided according to age in a number of groups (generations) called *rika* in ki-Rwa. Each *rika* has its own name, and solidarity is strong between its members. Through circumcision and initiation, young men enter the youngest *rika* to which their circumcised age mates already belong. Each *rika* thus stays open for recruitment during fifteen years or so. After that, it will close and take over the status of warriors, while a new generation of younger men will be opened and given a name. This takes place when the previous generation of warriors, retires. The role of the new active generation consists of going to war (in the past) and in bringing back livestock stolen by the Maasai (this is still the case nowadays in the pastoral areas), while the retired generations are there to give advice. Generally, the main role of the generation system, as explained by the Rwa themselves, is to see to it that everyone behaves and respects the elders. The rules of behaviour, which are tightly codified, are largely the work of the generation to which one belongs and are taught secretly to the young after circumcision. Locally, each generational group chooses a chief, and all these local chiefs elect a generation chief whose authority extends to all the members of this generation in the Rwa community.

The community is led by a 'big chief', *nshili nnini*, appointed by all the chiefs and elders who meet for this purpose under a large sacred tree,



the *mringaringa* (*cordia abyssinica*), in the very central village of Poli. The chief thus chosen represents and has authority over all the Rwa. This 'traditional' chieftainship is relatively recent since the first of these chiefs was elected in 1951. In the beginning this institution co-existed with the chieftaincy put in place under the colonial system, whose chiefs, called *mangi*, were considered by the Rwa to be puppets in the pay of the government of the day. The sixteenth and last *mangi* saw this post abolished in 1963, when the traditional chieftaincy was abolished by the Tanzanian government. This government measure did not hinder the prerogatives and influence of the 'big chief', but they operate informally since he is not recognized by the administration.

The conflict which we are now going to describe was an occasion to observe the level of solidarity of the different institutional groups of which the Rwa community is composed, the role played by the 'big chief' and the weight of this institution, faced with the other authorities in place, those of the church and the government administrative authorities.

### *The conflict*

Amongst the multiple causes that can be attributed to this religious conflict, which profoundly affected Rwa social life from 1990 to 1993, some are deep rooted, others more circumstantial. In the profusion of alleged causes Rwa dissenters' reasons for the conflict are vehemently contested by clerical authorities, who analyse the facts in a totally different manner. Let us consider the first point of view.

According to the Rwa, the underlying cause of the conflict is the hold by the Chaga on the Northern Diocese and their refusal to treat the Rwa community, a minority within the diocese, in an equal manner. It is a fact that the Chaga as a whole are richer than the Rwa and the property managed by the Lutheran church in Chaga country is greater, more modern and better kept than in Rwa country. The Rwa put forward, in particular, the number of secondary schools and even more so the number and the modernity of hospitals in Chaga areas (those of Machame, Marangu and especially Moshi), which contrasts strongly with the poverty of the only hospital in Rwa country, the one at Nkoaranga.

It is not surprising that the disparity in the economic standards between the Chaga and the Rwa are reflected at the level of the infrastructure managed by the church. However, the inferiority complex that the Rwa suffer as regards the Chaga is not the only concern. It seems that a discriminatory attitude did actually characterize the authorities of the Diocese, although the church strongly defends itself against this charge. According to other external observers, the Chaga leaders of the Northern Diocese seem to have shown 'tribalism' in the manner in which they systematically favoured the Chaga part of the diocese, to the detriment of

the Rwa. The latter, believing that funds they paid to the Lutheran church profited the Chaga more than themselves, wanted to secede in order to keep to themselves the benefits of their efforts. However, we cannot accuse the Rwa of 'tribalism', for several reasons. In the first place, the conflict was limited to Rwa country: the Rwa fought amongst themselves, the partisans of secession against those loyal to the clerical authority. The Chaga remained outside this conflict. Moreover, one of the most eminent members of the dissenting group, Reverend Mshana, is a Pare. It is he, and not a Rwa, who accused the Chaga leaders of the Northern Diocese of tribalism. In this case, was this conflict provoked by 'tribalism' of one or the other group? It is a difficult case to decide, because the difference in wealth and standards of living of the Rwa and the Chaga is unquestionable. Whether mixed with 'tribalism' or not, this difference on its own incontestably constitutes one of the underlying causes of the conflict. Like Bayart and Mbembe as regards the Douala Archdiocese battle in Cameroon, it seems more exact to say here also that 'a conflict called tribal can hide another'.<sup>11</sup>

Another more circumstantial event, largely contributed to aggravating the situation: it concerns the election by the church in 1986 of a new bishop as the head of the Northern Diocese, following the death of the previous one. The brusque personality of the new bishop, Erasto Kweka, a Chaga like his predecessor, put an end to the good relations with the Rwa that the latter's more flexible manner preserved until then. Shortly after his instalment the new bishop made hurtful remarks which were received unfavourably by the Rwa: when the latter came to him to complain that the Diocese sent few Rwa students to study in Europe, Kweka replied: 'Those that go to Europe go with their heads' (that is to say, 'we choose the best'). The Rwa then decided to take responsibility for their own development. The Rwa, who up to then only had one secondary school, at Makumira, decided to build new ones. In 1987, the Nkoaranga secondary school was founded, then that of Engare Nanyuki in 1988. In both cases, it was the village populations concerned that assumed the financial burden of these initiatives with the church's help.

At Nkoaranga, the construction of the secondary school provoked new friction with the bishop. In 1987 teaching had in effect begun under a tree, but in 1990 the elders of the parish decided to construct the school building on a coffee plantation belonging to the Lutheran church. The coffee plants were uprooted without the bishop's permission. But the latter, whose permission was later sought, refused to register the new school. This incident again showed the bishop's lack of flexibility, and contributed to stirring up tension.

11. J. Bayart and A. Mbembe, 'La bataille de l'archidiocèse de Douala', *Politique africaine*, 35, *L'argent de Dieu* (1989), p. 79.

But beyond the anecdotal, the construction of the Nkoaranga school poses a fundamental question: to whom does the church's property belong? If the question is without incident in times of peace, what happens when the faithful break away from the clergy? Who then owns the church, plantations, schools, and hospitals? The question is even more crucial when one considers that the property and the social role of the Lutheran church in Rwa country are considerable. In particular, the church's large modern buildings, whose construction was costly, are at the heart of social life, and cannot easily be replaced, all the more so because in this intensive agricultural zone, land is scarce and very expensive. With what money would another church be built, and on which land? The question of control of the material wealth of the Lutheran church was incontestably one of the major causes of the confrontations. People fought for the right to keep their churches and to worship there, a right which the religious authorities questioned.

This aspect of the problem was nevertheless completely masked by the Lutheran church, which challenged the Rwa's accusations of unequal treatment. The Lutheran church set out its position in a 40 page report, published in 1992 and partly reprinted in the *Business Times*.<sup>12</sup> According to the clerical authorities, responsibility for the conflict lies essentially with the main instigator of the rebellion, Jackson Kaaya, described as an agitator thirsty for personal power.

Who is this person? Aged over seventy at the time of the conflict, he enjoyed notoriety in days gone by in Rwa country. This dates back to the famous Meru Land Case, at the beginning of the 1950s. The Rwa rebelled against the British colonial authorities who wanted to expropriate their land in the rich pastoral region of Engare Nanyuki, to the east of Mount Meru. The Rwa had the affair taken right up to the United Nations Council by one of their men, Kirilo Japhet.<sup>13</sup> Japhet and Kaaya, in their thirties at the time, were among the leaders of this resistance movement opposed to colonial authority of whom the Rwa are extremely proud. The Meru Land Case was one of the preludes to the foundation in 1954 of the Tanganyika African National Union or TANU, under the direction of Julius Nyerere, and the fight for independence.

A former companion of Nyerere, Jackson Kaaya was for a long time in charge of the anti-corruption battle within the National Executive Committee of CCM. He was also president of the CCM for the Arusha region, but was beaten in the elections in 1985. This electoral defeat, according to the Lutheran church, stirred his thirst for personal power by inciting him to look elsewhere for compensation. He found this within the

12. *Business Times*, 25 December 1992.

13. Kirilo Japhet and Earl Seaton, *The Meru Land Case* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1967).

Lutheran church in 1988, when it nominated him as a member of the executive council of its Northern Diocese, for a period of four years, as well as a member of the Meru District Executive Council within the diocese. Kaaya thus remained an important personage of the first order and enjoyed a choice position within the Lutheran church.

In 1989, he became president of the Meru Educational and Social Development (MESODET) which was created at this time on the initiative of the whole Rwa community, in order to manage the funds received for development from each household. In 1990 it was decided that a tax of 1.25 Tanzanian shillings be levied on each kilo of coffee sold to the cooperatives to which the farmers sold their entire crop. This levy was not too high, since in 1990 coffee was bought at 230 shillings per kilo by the cooperative (later the market price fell catastrophically). Fifty million shillings were thus collected and served to construct or develop several secondary or technical schools as well as the Nkoaranga hospital.

The creation of MESODET illustrates the general organizational level of the Rwa community, and further indicates its willingness to take charge of its development without the financial help of the church. However, the funding constitution of MESODET included the Lutheran church to administer MESODET funds, in the same way that the church was already responsible for the administration of the secondary schools, training centres and hospital in Rwa country. So the Lutheran church was directly associated with the creation of this new institution and provided administrative infrastructure, but not funds. MESODET actions were complementary to, and not in competition with, the church's work, although they did make up for an inadequacy (in Rwa eyes) in the implementation of one of the church's objectives—contributing to development.

In 1990, two events turned the church authorities against Kaaya. The first was the construction of the Nkoaranga school on the church's coffee plantation. Jackson Kaaya, an influential member of this parish, was also elected school president by the students' parents, and his role was to see that the school was well kept and to call meetings when necessary. In the view of the church authorities, therefore, Kaaya must have been the main instigator of the uprooting of the coffee plants. The second incident, in the same year, was of a spiritual nature and provoked a definite severing of relations between Kaaya and the bishop. During his son's wedding, Kaaya served his guests large quantities of beer, as is customary among the Rwa. The Lutheran church condemns alcohol consumption and has been battling it vigorously in Rwa country for a long time. The Rwa however, like the Chaga, despite the church's teachings, remain for the major part assiduous drinkers of banana beer which quickly makes one drunk. In the past, drinking beer was the major activity for men in the afternoon, and for many of them it still is. Giving buckets of this banana beer is still an

indispensable preliminary amongst the Rwa when one wants to bring the elders together to debate a question, be it the settling of a land dispute, a marriage offer or a murder. Banana beer, once consumed in great quantities at all celebrations and notably during weddings, is now usually replaced by bottled beer and mainly soda, because of the growing Lutheran moral impact.

The church severely disciplined Kaaya: his title of member of the Executive Council of the Northern Diocese was removed, as was that of member of the Executive Council of Meru District within the diocese. The severity of the sanction however was not motivated solely by moral intransigence, but also a wish to make a point after the preceding incidents. It was, though, an undeniable blunder because not only did this cause Kaaya to revolt, but also the whole of the Rwa community whose representative he was. The Rwa saw a further example of discrimination by the clerical authorities. Why, they asked, was Kaaya's punishment so severe while the Chaga, who drank just as much, were not equally punished?

The feeling of injustice this provoked was the catalyst that caused the Rwa to push for secession. The tone rose rapidly. In a public meeting (presided over by Kaaya) on 29 September 1990, the MESODET leaders accused the Northern Diocese of deliberately trying to hold back development in Rwa district. On 3 October, the four leading MESODET officials decided to call a public meeting to discuss the formation of their new diocese within the Lutheran church, called the Mount Meru Diocese. They asked the district pastor to participate and to call the assembly but he refused. The meeting was however held on 29 October, bringing together 77 people under Kaaya's chairmanship. It declared the formation of a new diocese starting from 1 January 1991. The registration request was immediately presented to the government, which processed it on 15 December 1990.

The Lutheran church immediately contested the validity of this registration for 'technical reasons', and obtained its revocation on 16 February 1991. It also obtained from the Arusha tribunal the prohibition of the use of the official abbreviation of the Lutheran church, ELCT of KKKKT (*Kanisa la Kijijili la Kilutheri Tanzania*, kiSwahili translation of ELCT) by the new diocese. The dissenters however continued to use the abbreviations, because they still considered themselves Lutherans and members of this church. Furthermore, they fully expected to continue worshipping in the numerous Lutheran churches in the country. From then on, a vast propaganda movement developed within the Rwa community, aiming to win over a maximum of followers. The situation was very tense and incidents between the secessionists and the other side occurred from time to time: attempts at intimidation at church entrances; and destruction of

some fields and of property. The government called for calm and strove to maintain order.

But the rebellion spread and more than a year later the church ended up unwillingly accepting the formation of a new diocese corresponding to the former Meru district. On 11 March 1992, a General Assembly voted the creation of this nineteenth diocese, Meru Diocese, and a bishop was appointed. It thus hoped to re-establish its authority in Rwa country. But this initiative, coming so late, was badly received by the dissenters, founders of the Mount Meru Diocese (not to be confused with the Meru Diocese, newly created by the church), who demanded the recognition by the church of their own diocese. They fully intended to oppose, as strongly as they could, the creation of the official diocese that was in competition with theirs.

The birth of the authorized Meru Diocese thus marked the beginning of much more violent confrontations. On 18 March, the 710 delegates to the electoral conference of the Lutheran church met at the Usa River Rehabilitation Centre to approve the constitution of the new diocese and to elect the bishop and his team. But the partisans of the rebel diocese had promised to obstruct the meeting. One thousand five hundred demonstrators surrounded the building, armed with stones, arrows, spears, clubs and machetes. They tried to enter the building and called for the bishops. The army's Field Force Unit Anti-riot Squad was called in. It took two hours to disperse the demonstrators. A bishop was hurt, fourteen cars were destroyed, and a dissident was killed in the confrontations.

In the days and weeks that followed, the conflict starting in Nkoaranga spread and grew. The discord slowly extended to the whole of Rwa territory. Only the Engare Nanyuki region, to the east, remained outside the confrontation. On 25 March at Sakila, the police exhumed the body of a man killed by cuts from a machete and who had been hurriedly buried in secret. The next day 23 houses were destroyed at Nkoaranga, Seela and Singisi, and three more people died. Houses were burnt at night by groups of warriors singing traditional war songs of Maasai inspiration: it was thus a revival of old customs. Insecurity reigned in April at Poli and Kingori, areas most touched by the conflict. Its height was attained in April and May, when 60 families were counted as being homeless after their homes were burnt down, five dead were counted and damages were estimated at 73 million Tanzanian shillings. The victims came to Arusha to make their complaints and seek aid from the regional administrative authorities.

At the end of April 1992, a delegation of these refugees left for Dar-es-Salaam to seek an audience with the President of the Republic, who had them received by his Minister of State, Mr Lowassa. The latter

politely sent them back home. They then decided to inform the press.<sup>14</sup> For their part, the Lutheran authorities felt they had done what they could to resolve the problem and asked for the government's intervention. At the beginning of May 1992, the ELCT bishops were received by President Mwinyi. On 27 May in a new attempt at reconciliation, the President also received a delegation of 11 members of the opposing group. After this meeting, the Executive Council of the dissenting diocese held an emergency meeting and decided to preach peace for three consecutive Sundays. The prospects for peace seemed limited, however, because Kaaya clearly specified 'there will not be peace as long as we don't have the right to an autonomous diocese'.<sup>15</sup> This demand held importance due to the numerical strength of the rebel movement which was well implanted in 31 of the 35 parishes of the district.

To clarify the situation, the government carried out an inquiry into the number of followers allied to each camp. It showed that the church administrators were on the whole loyal to the bishop (of 35 pastors and deacons and 114 evangelists of the diocese, only 3 pastors and 15 evangelists were allied to the rebel diocese), while the general population on the whole took sides with the rebel diocese. In June 1992, according to estimates, 80 to 95 percent of the Lutherans of Rwa district allied themselves with the Mount Meru diocese. There was therefore a clear imbalance in the forces present: on one side the clergy and on the other the populace (with the exception of two villages, Singisi and Mulala, where the population was on the whole in favour of the Meru Diocese, but put together they do not represent more than 10 percent of the faithful of the district). It seemed that an impasse had been reached, and the conflict took a more marked ideological turn.

Lacking the power to express themselves in the written press or on radio, these being controlled by the government and the church, the rebels expressed themselves by means of open letters. One of them, dated May 1992, denounced the use of force by the opposing party: the Usa River church had been transformed into a military training centre by the clerical authorities, and when preaching, Bishop Kweka had himself been escorted by the police (notably at the Ndoombo church). This behaviour, the letter stressed, was contrary to the liberty of conscience which should be the rule in religious matters, as taught by Martin Luther himself. The dissenters presented themselves as the real followers of Luther's beliefs and denounced authoritarianism, the thirst for power and even neo-colonialism by the clergy, whose attitude, according to them, was responsible for the present troubles. They illustrated their viewpoint with eloquent drawings (see illustrations).

14. *The Express*, 23–29 April 1992.

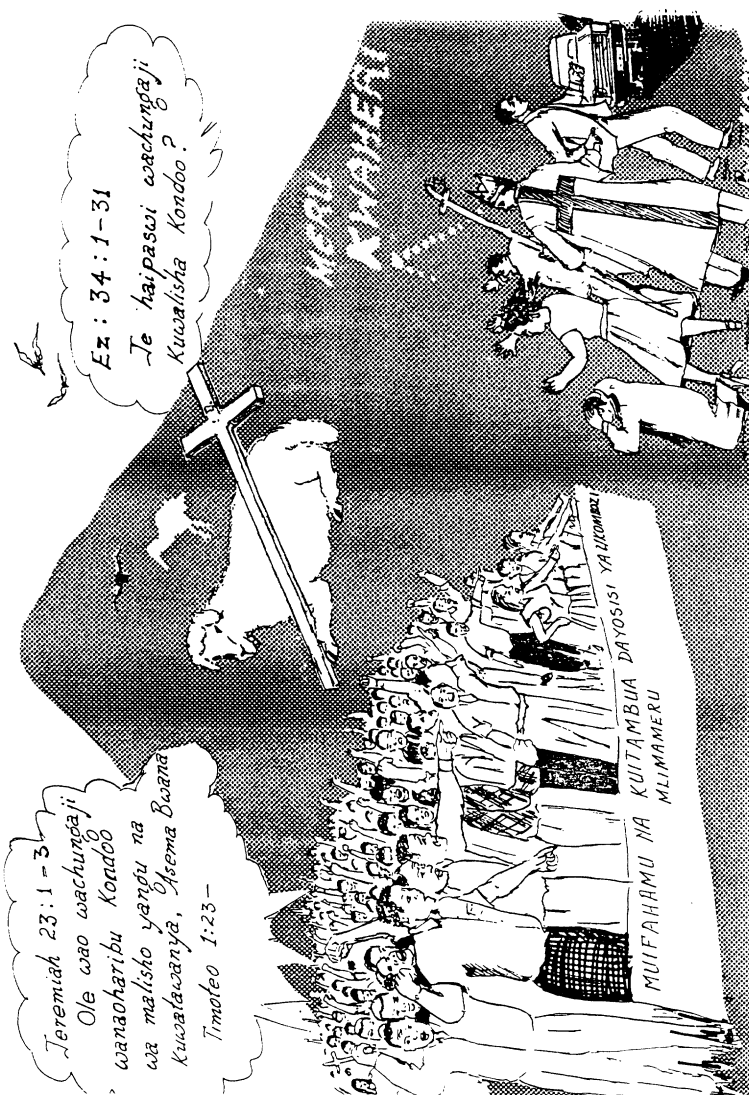
15. *Daily News*, 3 June 1992.

In spite of appeals for calm, the tension had risen too high for an end to the confrontations, and furthermore the government's recognition of Meru Diocese, newly authorized by the church, followed its course. At the end of May, serious incidents at Nkoaranga and Makumira forced the government to once again bring in the army. The leaders of the Mount Meru Diocese criticized the dispatch of the troops, according to them a reason for the worsening of the conflict. The partisans of the opposing camp, for their part, blamed the Mount Meru leaders for creating a situation which necessitated military intervention.

Meanwhile, the ordination of the Meru Diocese bishop, Paulo Akyoo, took place on 6 June 1992, under high surveillance by the army. The government, invited to the ceremony, refused to attend because the bishop's ordination was seen as a challenge to its efforts at reconciliation. Faced with the church's intransigence, it marked its disfavour in this manner. As for the Rwa Lutherans who rallied around the rebel diocese, they too considered the bishop's ordination as a challenge. In trying to appease the two parties, the government announced the imminent re-registration of the Mount Meru Diocese. The certificate of incorporation was signed by its leader on 29 June in Dar-es-Salaam, and it was formally registered on 26 July. Meanwhile on 24 July government had also registered the Meru Diocese. From then on, the two rival Lutheran dioceses, were simultaneously recognized by government on the same territory.

The months that followed were marked by an intense ideological and media battle between the two dioceses. Thanks to its influence with the press, the Lutheran church had several articles printed which presented the opposition as a band of rogues trying to obtain followers by force and intimidation. For lack of access to the media, the rebel diocese responded by means of open letters. One of them, dated 6 October 1992, was signed by Reverend Mshana, the Pare pastor mentioned above, who was teaching at the Lutheran Theological College at Makumira before being dismissed by the Lutheran church at the beginning of the conflict because of his sympathy with the dissenters. The letter is addressed to the 'peace loving government' and describes bishop Kweka as a tyrant who imposed his own version of events on the media. It also denounced the influence of the Pentecostal church within the Lutheran church. In fact, the Pentecostal church was enjoying increased development in Rwa country, for the most part because numerous Lutherans discouraged by the conflict turned to this other denomination. Founded in 1906 in the United States, pentecostalism only appeared in 1968 in Rwa country, starting in Mulala village north-east of Nkoaranga, where the Baptist Church had also started two years earlier. Apart from theological differences linked in particular to the concept of baptism, pentecostalism distinguishes itself

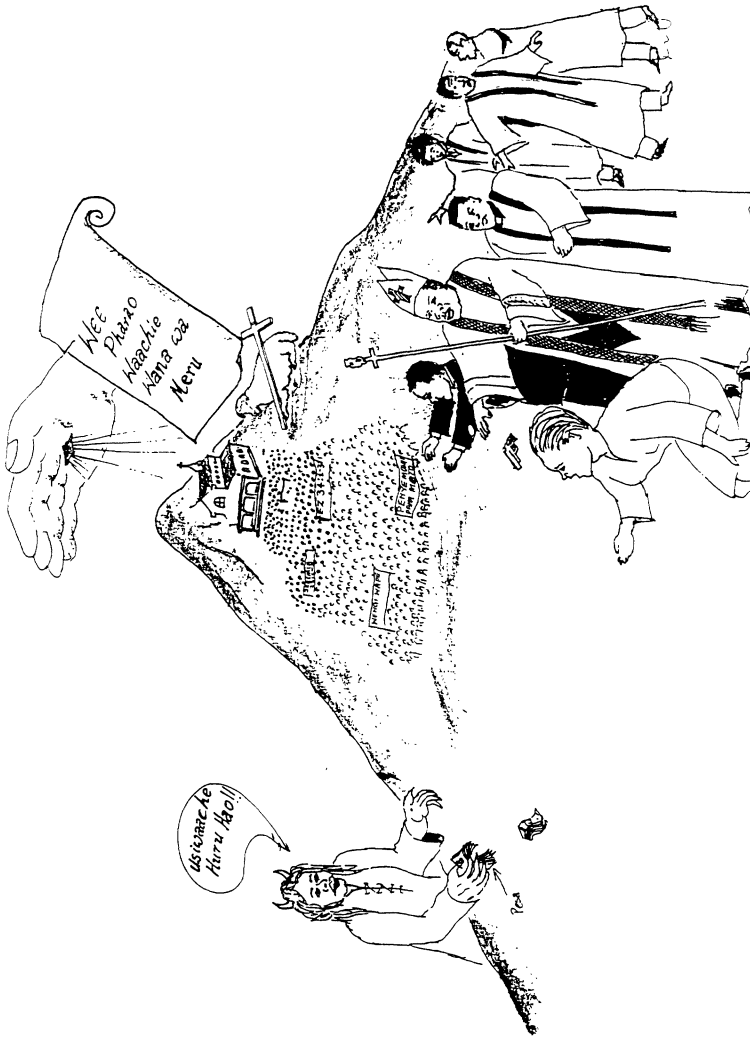




Jeremiah 23: 1-3 Woe unto the shepherds who destroy and divide my flock; says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 34: 1-31 Should not the shepherds feed the flock?

Placard: Acknowledge and understand the liberation of the Mount Meru diocese  
The priest and his group: Good bye Meru!



*Manuscript:* Pharaoh, let the children of Meru go.

*The devil:* Do not let them go!

*Placards in the crowd:* We must follow the voice of the majority. (Majority must win)  
Where there's smoke there's fire!

from Lutheranism by its greater severity towards alcohol and polygamy (which gives credence, at least in part, to Mshana's accusation). Pentecostals consider they have higher moral standards than the Lutherans and to them preaching is an important duty. So even a few of them have a big influence. As for the Baptists, they do not preach as much as the Pentecostals, so they are a lesser threat to the Lutheran church. The dynamism of the Pentecostals worried the Lutheran authorities, and in reaction a revival movement started in 1978 within the Lutheran Church in the same area of Mulala, stressing a new experience of personal salvation, harmony and peace. With the accusation of pentecostalism made by Mshana against the Lutheran church, in his open letter of 6 October, the conflict took on, albeit belatedly, a theological turn that it did not have at all in the beginning, probably because the ranks of the rebel diocese hardly counted any real theologians apart from Reverend Mshana.

Another open letter from the Mount Meru Diocese, dated 30 October 1992 and signed Balthazar Kaaya, covered similar material. It addressed itself to the church authorities in response to articles that had appeared in the press. It described the dissenters as authentic Lutherans, who opposed the interference of the Pope and bishops between God and his faithful. 'Your role', wrote Balthazar Kaaya to the leaders of the ELCT, 'is to serve not to judge, that is why you are wrong in wanting to curb the liberty of worship by the members of Mount Meru Diocese by pressuring the government to annul its registration ...' 'We are', he said in conclusion, 'a free people of God and nobody can get in the way of our freedom of conscience'.

Born at the beginning of the sixteenth century out of a dispute over ecclesiastical power, the Lutheran church, through an identical process finds itself in turn on the accused's bench. The case is far from unique in East Africa. This questioning of clerical authority stimulates spiritual discussions in Rwa country, not only between Lutherans on both sides but among Pentecostals, Baptists, and the revival group which, starting from the village of Mulala in 1978, developed within the Lutheran church in reaction to the new denominations. But the Lutheran clergy kept a closed mind to any spirit of dialogue: in response to these attacks, it excommunicated the Mount Meru Diocese.<sup>16</sup> This intransigence did not prevent it from definitely losing the comfortable monopoly of religious and moral authority it had held till then.

In this spiritual *mêlée*, the Lutheran church was ignorant of the accusation against it and attempted to place the debate in another arena. According to it, the dissenters are Satan's henchmen, alcoholic and

16. See Bishop Kolowa's letter published in the ELCT journal, *Umoja Magazine*, 1 & 2, (1992) p. 32.

polygamous despite the church's teachings, and are hanging on to backward practices. Indeed some traditional practices which marked the rebellion fed this point of view. The Rwa ethnic feelings, which are the point of departure for the conflict, are first criticized as a show of 'tribalism', even though this accusation, made by both parties, is debatable, as we have shown above. Secondly, the church denounced Jackson Kaaya's complaisance—and that of his followers—towards alcoholism, basing this on behaviour (duly sanctioned) at the time of his son's wedding. But it was mostly the reprisal carried out by the rebels which took on a traditional form: they set fire to their adversaries' homes, as was done in the past (the British authorities in particular did this to Rwa rebels of Engare Nanyuki during the Meru Land Case). The authors of these reprisals were traditional warriors, meeting at night and singing Maasai war songs, as used to happen in the past. These warriors constitute one of the classes of the Rwa age system. In this conflict, violence thus took on a generational aspect which is a traditional role in this society. The arms used: stones, swords (like the Maasai), arrows, clubs and machetes are also arms used in the past and rather pathetic against the Tanzanian army's weaponry. All this gives the impression that to defend their cause in a conflict that has nothing to do with past history, Rwa dissenters were not able to extract themselves from the traditional mould that shaped them. In many ways their rebellion took on an aspect of peasant revolt doomed to failure. This does not however signify that the dissenters were nostalgic for the past, far from it. But these traditional forms of expression allowed the opposition to stigmatize them as reactionaries and to pose in contrast as a modern institution fighting against outdated customs.

The church therefore once more loudly denounced the ill effects of alcohol and the immorality of polygamy. In fact, alcohol was a real institution amongst the Rwa when the first Lutheran missionaries arrived at the beginning of the century. Drinking banana beer was a favourite past time for men, while the women were working in the fields. Beer was indispensable for the celebration of any social event. No clan meeting, for example, could be organized without beer drinking and many a traditional payment had to be made in pots of banana beer, such as when arranging for a wedding or in compensation for physical injuries. The church has fought against beer drinking steadily and with growing success. Nonetheless, it remains a custom, especially as concerns men, as is evidenced by the large number of bars many of them frequent daily to drink banana beer in the afternoon.

As for polygyny, the Lutherans have fought it right from the beginning, and it has diminished slowly by dint of persuasion. In fact, men, in the past, married several women above all to farm their land: the more land a man possessed, the more wives he had to farm the land. Women

themselves were widely in favour of polygyny, and they first reacted strongly against the missionaries' criticism of this institution: a women would have too much work, they protested, if she were man's only wife.<sup>17</sup> Even though the church always argued in favour of monogamy, it has up to now maintained a certain flexibility: polygynists are not banned from the church, even more so because it is often the wives, converted first, who bring their husbands into the Christian faith. The spectacular fall in polygyny, since the beginning of the century, is due primarily to growing land shortage. With the current population increase, many young couples do not have enough land to live on, and many persons marry later.

Besides alcohol and polygyny, the church also battled with another Rwa custom, the generation system. This institution has been responsible for the maintenance of order and respect for the elders, but the church resented the solidarity between members of the same generational group as a hindrance to conversion. At the same time, it condemned some manifestations during celebrations. An important part of the Rwa generation ceremony, in which one generation of warriors retires while the following one takes over, is the occasion for notorious drinking feasts and for dancing considered lascivious by the church. For a long time the church has condemned both practices. But now the new appearance of warriors burning the homes of the faithful and the generational solidarity, seen as before as an obstacle to the church's influence, prompted the church to fight the harder against this institution. Whether in reaction to the church's condemnation or not, it is undeniable that the Lutheran dissenters showed in regard to these traditional aspects of their society, a complacency that could only further antagonize the clerical authorities. The case is clear as far as beer drinking is concerned, if judged by Jackson Kaaya's attitude during his son's wedding, although this does not signify that all the dissenters were fervent drinkers. As for polygyny, the church's denunciation seems more a matter of principle than response to a continuing reality. Finally, it is true that the generation system was supported in its festive manifestations in 1992 by the presence of the leaders of the rebel diocese.

At the end of 1992 in the Engare Nanyuki region which remained outside the conflict, two Rwa generation ceremonies, at which I had the opportunity to be present, were held. These ceremonies marked the moment of the withdrawal of one generation of warriors while the next one took over. Each one is locally organized in a village or group of villages by the members of the retiring generation, and only takes place about every fifteen years. The preceding one took place in 1976. No clerical

17. Thomas Spear (ed.), *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt. Extracts on Arusha and Meru, 1897-1914*, translated by C. M. Murphy and T. M. Murphy (African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995), p. 40.

authority was present at the first one, which only concerned the village of Olukungwado. The second one, much larger, was organized by four villages of Engare Nanyuki district and was honoured by the presence of several eminent people, among them, the 'great chief' Moses Nnko, Kirilo Japhet the champion of the Meru Land Case, and a Lutheran pastor of the rebel diocese. The latter did preach for a long time during the ceremony, unembarrassed using this traditional ceremony as an opportunity to express the teachings of the church. It is thus seen that the partisans of the rebel diocese did not feel that there was any incompatibility between the Christianity that they believed in and the customs they practiced, which is not the case of the official Lutheran church which, in trying to reduce the Rwa conflict into a fight between modernists and traditionalists, was trying to pose as the champion of modernity. This renewed hostility from the church towards the showing of traditionalism in Rwa society, and to the generation system in particular, may contribute to the breaking up of this institution which, to this day, still plays an important role in the social integration of each individual.

While the church strove to fight against certain Rwa traditional customs, the Mount Meru Diocese partisans tried to take over the institutions managed by the Lutheran church on their territory. To this end, some of them confiscated the car of the director of Leguruki Vocational Training School, a school held in very high regard where numerous young Rwa learn a manual trade. But faced with the threat of the school's closure, the car was returned to him and it remained open. Nkoaranga hospital was also besieged, but as the dissenters did not have the money to pay the doctors, they left and the running of the hospital was severely restricted. As we have seen, the rebel diocese did, however, unite a large proportion of Rwa. It had the acceptance of the 'great chief', Moses Nnko (who however lived in Mulala, a village where the faithful remained loyal to the bishop). In order to re-establish peace, Moses Nnko called a general meeting under the *mringaringa* tree on 28 December 1992. But it was a failure: only members of the rebel diocese showed up at the meeting. The 'great chief' thus lost a good deal of credibility, because his normal function is that of reconciliation: if he places his chief's staff (*ndata*) between two belligerents, in principle they should stop fighting immediately because of the magic symbolism of this staff. In this case therefore, in the absence of one of the parties which refused to come to the meeting, reconciliation was a vain hope. Equally unlikely is the wish of the partisans of the rebel diocese to elect their bishop and his aides, because a reconciliation did not take place the bishop's appointment was impossible: he would need the recognition of the Lutheran church authorities. Mount Meru Diocese thus remains an outlaw for the church and, despite its recognition by the government, it is not able to function normally. Numerous families,

troubled by this religious schism, prefer to put off their children's baptisms or weddings in order to avoid having to openly take sides with either camp. The running of schools is held up and social life generally disrupted. In order to avoid new problems the government forbade any public meetings.

In an effort to end the deadlock, the leaders of the rebel diocese organized a meeting, despite the ban, at Kilala on 11 February 1993, but the conflict resumed worse than ever and the government tracked down the troublemakers. No matter what side they were on, they were punished. During Easter confrontations surfaced again. On Good Friday, four Meru Diocese members were arrested for having stopped partisans of the other side from entering the church.<sup>18</sup> On Easter Sunday 1993, in the parishes of Nguruma and Singisi, the faithful on both sides started fighting again, each side preventing the other from entering the church. The police intervened and were met with a barrage of stones.

With the arrest in mid-April of the four main leaders of Mount Meru Diocese, the conflict took a new turn, for two reasons. Firstly they were reproached for having ignored the ban on meetings, and secondly for misappropriation of funds: 12 million Tanzanian shillings disappeared from the MESODET coffers.<sup>19</sup> The accused immediately denied any corruption, but the Lutheran church at once took hold of this and gave it as the first reason for the conflict: according to it the leaders of Mount Meru Diocese were thieves, they had started this attempt at dissension in order to hide their crime from their naïve followers.

Did this accusation sow the seeds of doubt among the faithful? This is not certain. Many only saw a further injustice and right from the announcement of the arrest of their leaders in mid-April, the partisans of the Mount Meru Diocese called meetings in several villages (Akeri, Ngwandia, Amburoni, Ndoombo, Seela) to organize the battle against the rival diocese and to obtain freedom for the prisoners. Sporadic incidents occurred and the Mount Meru Diocese (led by longstanding companions of Julius Nyerere, and thus benefiting from government favour in the beginning) was ever more strongly resisted. On 20 June 1993, the house of a partisan of the official diocese was burnt in Ndoombo. Everybody was on the alert and some villages organized a night watch in order to prevent attacks. This was the case in Singisi, a village which had on the whole remained faithful to the clerical authorities and was surrounded on all sides by villages favourable to the opposing group.

The government's efforts to maintain order made it more and more unpopular. Certain local CCM party chairmen, held responsible for the trouble in their village, were imprisoned for a couple of days. Some are

18. *Uhuru* ('Independence', CCM party newspaper), 9 April 1993.

19. *Uhuru*, 15 April 1993.

said to have given in their party cards in protest on leaving prison and to have stopped going to their village offices to perform their normal management duties. Only the village secretaries continued working and minimum service was ensured. Hurt by the repression to which they were subjected, the Rwa became hostile to the government and refused to show any public-spiritedness. They no longer paid taxes. Dissidence and repression became more marked, while a number of uncontrolled elements (brigands or young delinquents pushed by the absence of economic prospects) took advantage of the situation. The Mount Meru Diocese, incapable of containing the violence, became discredited. Finally, because of the unrest it provoked, and under pressure from religious authorities, the government revoked its registration. The rebel diocese was thus deprived of all legitimacy.

As the main leader of this movement, Jackson Kaaya was henceforth *persona non grata* and was arrested once more on 28 June 1993, and gatherings of more than five people were prohibited. On 7 and 8 July 1993 the partisans of the revoked diocese destroyed houses, cowsheds and the fields of two members of the rival diocese in retaliation. The government cracked down energetically on these new criminal acts. In the days that followed, the police carried out house searches in order to find the leaders. While four leaders of the Mount Meru Diocese stood trial for having initiated these troubles, in Poli district, 42 people were arrested and numerous families fled. Identical raids were made in different villages, in particular in Ndatu and Akeri. On Saturday, 17 July 1993 in particular, the police drove along the Kilala mud road. In the hope of barring their return route, some people tried to block the road, but, without much success. In Ndatu the police rounded up all the inhabitants that they could find: young and old, men and women were taken to prison for a night and released the next day. The next day at Akeri soldiers encircled the church during a service and took about 20 worshippers to prison for the night. Meanwhile, the leaders of Mount Meru Diocese were still in prison.

Was it after this retaliation, or the effect of growing questioning of these schemes, that the Rwa population as a whole began to realize the extent of the deadlock? They could not continue unlawful acts which even their consciences rebelled against, neither could they hope to win a fight in which the balance of power was clearly unfavourable to them. Furthermore, in a radical change of mind, meetings were organized to try and decide whether hostilities should be pursued or not. People (mainly men) met and as usual a president and a secretary for the meeting were designated. A head count was carried out to ensure that a quorum was reached. After several speeches a vote was taken by a show of hands, and in a unanimous move, it was decided to put an end to the hostilities. Most



villages in Rwa country democratically made the same decision. In the village of Ndatu where I was present at the meeting, two men were chosen to identify trouble-makers to the authorities, and an emissary announced to the District Commissioner that the inhabitants of Ndatu henceforth wanted peace and would now welcome his visit which had been postponed because of their hostility to him. After discussion it was agreed that for a mission of this kind a generation chief was more representative of the whole community than a clan chief. Then the 22 ten cell leaders (amongst whom only one woman was to be found) were instructed to speak in favour of peace to the families for which they were responsible. From then on peace was re-established in Rwa country, at least in deed if not in the hearts of the people. But at this stage, tribute must be paid to the wisdom of the Rwa. Although strong passions seemed unleashed, in a surprising way they managed, by democratic vote, to cut short this turmoil and to end physical hostilities, thus following the Christian teaching to which they profoundly adhere.

However, 18 months later it was clear that the uneasiness the conflict had spread in Rwa country had far from disappeared. The former followers of Mount Meru Diocese still shunned the official Lutheran Meru Diocese. They founded their own separate church, which they called the African Mission Evangelism Church, or AMEC. Its bishop, Luka Pallangyo, who is a former pastor from the Lutheran church was elected on 27 November 1993. As Bishop Pallangyo explained, this new church has no spiritual demarcation from the Lutheran faith; only the organization is different. But AMEC, which is a new church with a new name, stands alone. It is not part of a wider religious network, and, contrary to the Lutheran church, it has no support from other churches within or outside Tanzania. It was still awaiting registration by the government in Dar-es-Salaam. The members of AMEC had given up their claims on the Lutheran church buildings, fields and other properties and started to build their own churches. One AMEC benefactor in Ndatu village for example had given a piece of land on which a new wooden church was built, as probably was also the case in other parts of Rwa country.

As for MESODET, because of the enduring malaise in Rwa country, its activities were still at a standstill. Indeed, the alleged embezzlement of funds within MESODET was still awaiting trial. The split between the Lutheran church and MESODET seemed to be final, as the main leaders of MESODET also belonged to the former Mount Meru Diocese, now turned into the AMEC Church. The Lutheran church evicted some leading members of the former Mount Meru Diocese from the bodies of the schools it administers. Conversely, MESODET gathered a big meeting under the big sacred *mringaringa* tree in Poli on 6 January 1995, in order to modify its constitution. The changes decided upon included the

eviction of ELCT as manager of MESODET, and an open call for members of all denominations. At the end of the meeting, a delegation of four people was elected to register the new MESODET constitution in Dar-es-Salaam. It was then suggested to levy a tax of 100 shillings per kilo of coffee brought to the cooperatives, which should bring in 500 million shillings to be spent for Rwa development.

Thus MESODET tried to bring new life to its former activities, but some uncertainty remained. Indeed, the main leaders of MESODET clearly belonged to the former Mount Meru Diocese. Although they claim to represent all of the Rwa community, can they be considered as such and will they be in a position to work for the general interest? The management of the 500 million Tanzanian shillings which are expected to be collected out of coffee production also raises some difficult questions, because important amounts are intended for the development of secondary schools, which the Lutheran church administers. Will MESODET try to keep full control of this budget, or will it let the Lutheran church have these funds, considering that some of MESODET's prominent leaders were expelled by the church from the administrative bodies of these schools? The question is far from settled.

As for the Lutheran church itself, since the end of the open hostilities it seems to have been playing a low key. Pastors visit families, trying to bring back contact and confidence, and to persuade believers to return to the fold. Many new Rwa pastors were recently ordained to take office in their own tribe, which brings the rate of clergy indigenization in the Meru diocese to a high level as compared to other Lutheran dioceses in Tanzania. This policy, in the long run, may well smooth the local situation, and even if things are still uneasy, Lutheran churches are far from empty.

### *Conclusion*

It is now clear that the previous hegemony of the Lutheran church has come to an end, and this certainly is one of the important consequences of this religious conflict. Rwa people are definitely heading towards religious pluralism, even if the indigenization by the Lutheran church of its local clergy may bring some of the faithful back to it. On the whole, despite the apparent calm, another consequence of this conflict is the lasting malaise it has brought in Rwa social relationships. Hate will probably remain for a long time, within families as well as in relations with neighbours, because each family, each community, had partisans in both camps. The same can be said for the two rival dioceses (now churches) which each brought together rich and educated as well as poor people in comparable proportions. No clear sociological demarcation seems to have influenced this conflict: not parental, generational, clan origin, wealth, or level of education. Each individual seems to have chosen his camp according to

his own conscience. Solidarity along social lines did not come into play; and it is perhaps this aspect of the conflict which made it so destructive and painful for everyone.

Furthermore, we have seen that these events for a time immobilized a number of institutions. With the final vote that put a stop to hostilities, their functioning was re-established as normal, with the exception of MESODET. It is possible, however, that the bitterness that still lingered towards the government and clerical authorities somewhat hindered the functioning of these organizations. As for the 'great chief's' authority, we have seen that it was harmed in the conflict because he proved incapable of reconciling the two parties. All things considered, he only played a minor role and these events made him lose a little more of his influence. But for health reasons the 'great chief' had to resign and a new one, Betueli Paulo Kaaya, was elected in 1995. Because of his different personality, this new chief might be in a better position to bring the Rwa social puzzle back together.

From a territorial view point, this conflict brought to light the social pre-eminence of administrative borders inherited from colonialism, as much in the social domain (village divisions) as religious (the division of parishes largely modelled on that of the villages). The basic geographic unity, as seen here, is really the village. It is the village that decides, by majority vote, what action should be taken; it was at village level that night watches were established; and it was the village by democratic vote, that finally decided to put an end to the hostilities. The village is therefore not simply an administrative unit, it is also a fundamental social unit.

The factors at play in this conflict, on the whole, are numerous and complex, which would make prediction hazardous. The analysis is the more difficult as the situation is different from one Rwa village to another. For example the new church, AMEC is more strongly established in the western part of Rwa country. Will it succeed in keeping its followers and developing a strong hold all over the country? Its assets now seem somewhat weak, as opposed to those of the powerful and long established Lutheran church, which relies on impressive wealth as well as generous outside support.

The future of MESODET also seems uncertain. Will it be in a position to play the leading role it intends in local development? Its conflict with the Lutheran church is far from over, and may well be a lasting hindrance to Rwa development. Besides, as coffee producers, the Rwa mainly rely on coffee sale to provide for development funds. The control of coffee cooperatives therefore is a key issue. Are the cooperatives going to contribute to MESODET as expected? The sociology of cooperatives needs further research. It is another key element in understanding further developments of Rwa economics and politics which are intricately linked.