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Introduction— Rwanda and the Field Sites

In 1984, when this study of brick and roof tile industries began, Rwanda, with its leader, Juvenal Habyarimana, was the darling of the world community, the development agencies, and the media. A peaceful African backwater, it appeared to have a government that was relatively uncorrupt, a people who were hardworking, and an economy that was booming. Because of my interest in labor organization and small industries, I decided to conduct my research on the small brick and roof tile industries found in virtually every marsh in the country. These industries, which used European technologies that had been adapted to the local conditions, had found a growing market in the building boom fueled by the new economic prosperity. An article in the *Toronto Star* epitomized the world's opinion of Rwanda and its government. It began, "Diplomats based in this tiny mist-shrouded, mountainy country call it a 'model of development for all of Africa.'" It went on to laud its peoples' "proud and sophisticated demeanor"; its annual economic growth of "5 per cent"; its president, a "military man . . . [who ruled in] the tradition of a benign king" albeit in a "limited democracy"; and praised it for avoiding the "ritual tribal bloodbaths" of its neighbor, Uganda. It was a country in which "even shabby dress [did] not seem to be tolerated" (*Toronto Star*, October 6, 1984). A decade later Rwanda was the byword for genocide and evil. The overidealized picture drawn by diplomats, development experts, and the press had shattered completely. The brickyards in this study had turned into graveyards and most of the specific brick and roof tile industries in this study no longer existed.

This book grew out of the realization that the political, economic, cultural, and social factors that created the conditions under which brick and production took place were also factors that provided some of the preconditions

for the genocide. This study of these industries provides a lens through which the lead-up to the events that so horrified the world in 1994 can be viewed.

The conditions and the history, which shaped the labor organization in these small industries, coupled with civil war and structural adjustment, also molded the politics of genocide in Rwanda. Labor organization in Rwanda was, and continues to be, embedded in political, economic, and social relations created by local history and local politics. These conditions have not changed significantly since the Rwandan Patriotic Front took power in 1994. These industries provide a means to examine the transformation of gender,¹ class, and power relations during the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, and to consider the explosive effects of these transformations on Rwandan culture and society. The precolonial conquest and centralization of power, the overlay of racism and exclusion created by the European colonialism, and the development of the postcolonial regimes produced the class, power, gender, and regional relations that were critical to the form taken by the genocide, are also central to understanding the nature of these industries and forms of labor organization.

The precolonial and colonial history of Rwanda is not about the destruction of previously egalitarian traditional structures by European imperialism or by the penetration of a capitalist economy. Rather, it is about the growth of hierarchical institutions within a fundamentally nonegalitarian system characterized by unequal social relations and strong regional distinctions. It is a history of conquest and assimilation, of the incorporation of different regions into the precolonial kingdom of Rwanda under varying circumstances, of the creation of ethnic groups based on the organization of economic life, and of the transformation of a largely ceremonial kingship into a centralized politically and economically powerful absolute monarchy. European colonialism recast the complex political and economic relations that were beginning to be phrased in terms of ethnicity in the late precolonial period into a simplified caste system based on “racial” categories that determined access to power, education, and status, as well as access to land and labor. The Social Revolution² of 1959–1962 led to the codification of “tradition” by the Hutu elite, who took power and entrenched a very different system of land tenure between the different regions of Rwanda. This revolution lodged power into the hands of the Hutu elite from the south. This in turn fueled the overthrow of the First Republic by a faction of the army drawn from the Hutu elite of the north. Since the reign of King Rwabugiri (1860–1895), power in Rwanda has been based on regional and ethnic exclusion.

Ethnicity and power have been intertwined throughout Rwandan history. Precolonial Rwanda was a kingdom in which there were three ethnic groups, the Tutsi, the Hutu, and the Twa. At the time of European contact, a few Tutsi aristocratic clans dominated the elite. While there were some Hutu lords, the

majority of the Hutu population were peasants. The Twa, who comprised less than 1 percent of the population, were predominantly hunter-gatherers or potters, although a few found their way into the courts. However, these distinctions can be misleading as these three groups were not, and are not distinguished by, language, culture, religion, or geography.³ Although Rwanda has been characterized as a “caste system” in much of the colonial literature, this characterization is inaccurate. The majority of Tutsi were commoners, members of commoner clans, and like the majority of Hutu, they were peasants.⁴ They spoke the same language, Kinyarwanda, they lived interspersed throughout the country,⁵ and they practiced the same religion. Because of the history of conquest in Rwanda, the members of the three groups within a region often share more common cultural traits with each other than they do with members of the same “ethnic group” from other regions. Moreover, all the patrilineal clans of Rwanda were made up of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa lineages. Although Rwanda began as a German colony in 1899, from 1916 until independence in 1961 a Belgian Protectorate governed through a tiny Tutsi elite. After the revolution of 1959–1962, a Hutu elite held power through two regimes but they represented different regions of Rwanda. The First Republic (1961–1973) was dominated by a central and southern Hutu elite, while the Second Republic (1973–1994) was dominated by a northern Hutu elite. Since 1994 the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front, most of whom come from the 1959 diaspora, have held power and local Hutu and Tutsi have been virtually excluded from access to power.

Three conundrums have characterized Rwandan political history and governance: the centralization of power into the hands of a tiny minority, the intolerance of opposition, and the problem of succession. These conundrums have established the dynamics of inequality; have set the conditions of access to land, labor, and power; and have fashioned a society in which access to power and resources was, and continues to be, based on ethnic and regional politics and clientage. These factors also underpin the most striking features of the Rwandan enterprises that I studied: the relationship between clientalism⁶ and access to the means of production, the widespread practice of piecework, the lack of family labor in both big and small industries, and the role of women’s labor in agriculture in reproducing labor for industry. As this book will show, these dynamics also made a genocide possible. Let us begin by placing this study of Rwanda into its geographic, demographic, and economic context.

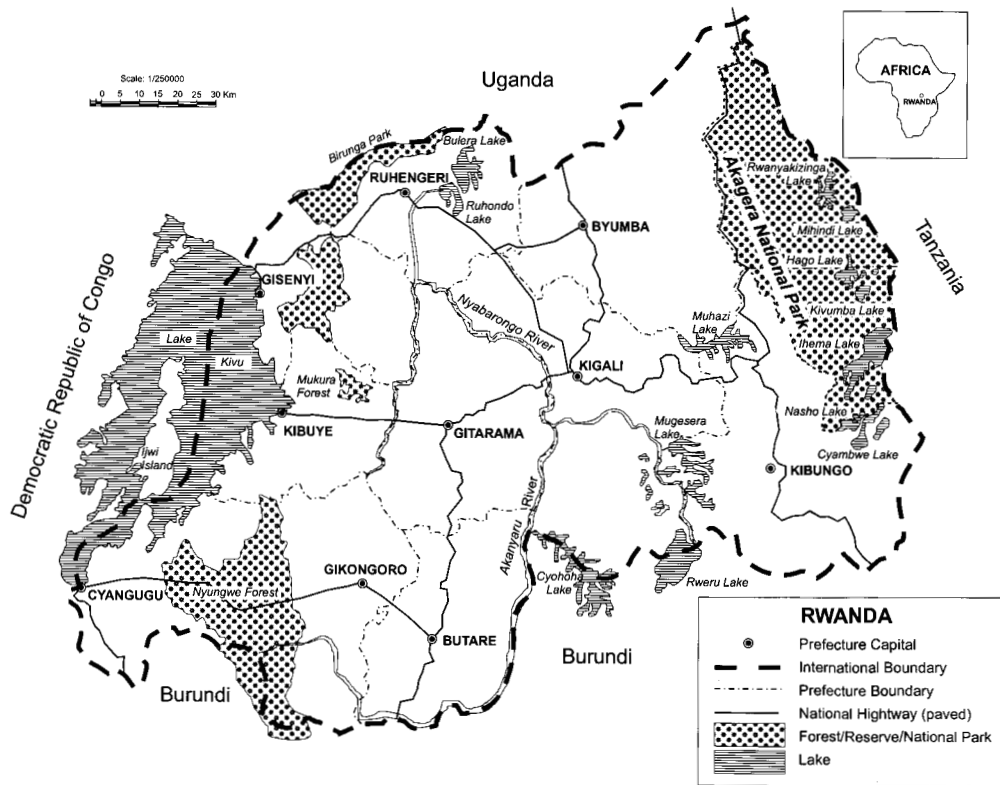
RWANDA

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country covering 26,340 km² in highland central Africa situated mostly between 1,000 m and 4,500 m above sea level and

bordering Lake Kivu. It borders on Burundi in the south, Uganda in the north, the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaïre) in the west, and Tanzania in the east (see map 1). The terrain of Rwanda varies quite dramatically. The northwestern region is mountainous, the central region is a hilly plateau, the northwest is a rolling savanna land, while the southeast is predominantly low-lying marshland. There is a great range in altitude, from 1,000 m to 4,500 m (Battistini and Prioul 1981:9–31). Most regions of Rwanda have marshy areas that yield clay and most contain small brick and tile enterprises. In 1983 when this research was begun, Rwanda was divided into ten *prefectures*.⁷

Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. The population⁸ was estimated by the Rwandan government to be 6.7 million in 1988 (MINIPLAN 1988) and at around 7,200,000 in 1999 (World Guide 2001:461). Over 90% of the population is rural. In 1978, 41% of the population lived in areas with a population density of more than 300 km², 47% lived in areas with a population density between 150 km and 300 km², and 12% lived in areas with a population density less than 150 km² (Prioul 1981:61–80). In 1979 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) figures posited an average population density of 336 km² with areas as high as 457 km² (D. Newbury 1999:32). As David Newbury points out, these “average figures veiled significant differences” between *prefectures* and in land holdings (D. Newbury 1999:32). In 1984, the National Agricultural Survey estimated that “15% of the farmers owned half of the land, especially in the provinces [*prefectures*] of rural Kigali, Gitarama, and Gikongoro” (Uvin 1998:113). Newbury argues that in 1993 “in some areas of Gisenyi [*prefecture*], 70% of homesteads held less than one-half hectare and a full 45% had less than one-quarter hectare” (D. Newbury 1999:32). From the 1980s on, there was a growing pattern of land concentration into the hands of the politically powerful and a growth of landlessness (Uvin 1998:112–113).

At the time of this study (1984–1988), coffee, tea, pyrethrum (the basis for a natural pesticide), and cinchona (the basis for quinine), as well as development aid, were the main sources of external revenue, and subsistence agriculture was the most important economic activity of the majority of the population. Cash crops occupied 4% of the country’s cultivated land, but provided 92% of the export revenues. Food crops, primarily for household consumption, were grown on the remaining cultivated land. The main food crops were bananas, beans, manioc (cassava), sorghum, sweet potatoes, and potatoes. Five percent of these crops were grown for sale (Jones and Egli 1984:12–14; EIU 1991:47). Development aid became an increasingly important source of foreign revenues from the mid-1970s on, growing from 60% in 1977 to over 90% in 1993. Foreign debt grew from 16% of the Gross National Product (GNP) in 1980 to 32% of the GNP in 1990 (Uvin 1998:41, 54).



MAP 1. Rwanda. Political Map (1983)

Formal sector industry and manufacturing were very limited. The 1991 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reports that the industrial and services sectors “accounted for only 5% of employment in 1960” and had increased to 9% by 1981. Three percent of the labor force worked in industry, 4% in services, and 93% in agriculture (EIU 1991:44–46). The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1987 was comprised of agriculture (37%), manufacturing (16%), other industry (7%), and services (40%). Of the 16% of the GDP generated by manufacturing, food processing (tea, coffee, beer, soft drinks, sugar, and oil) accounted for 10% and other manufacturing (cigarettes, matches, soap, plastic shoes, agricultural implements, and textiles) the remaining 6%. These figures do not include any informal sector activities, primarily tailoring, brick and roof tile making, adobe brick production, and pottery. It is impossible to estimate the number of enterprises involved in these forms of manufacturing. A 1989 proposal by the Université National de Rwanda to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) estimated that there are 5,000 artisanal brick industries in Rwanda, manufacturing approximately 60,000,000 bricks a year (IDRC 1989:8). This estimate illustrates the problem of statistics in Rwanda; roof tile industries, far more extensive than brick industries, were not included in these figures, although virtually every peasant home in Rwanda has a tiled roof.

FIELD SITES

The research was conducted in two of the most populated regions of Rwanda: Gisenyi *prefecture* in the northwest, and Butare *prefecture* in the south.⁹ The most intensive fieldwork was done in the *secteur* of Gatovu in the *commune* of Ruhashya in Butare *prefecture*,¹⁰ but comparative work was done in two urban locations in the city of Butare and in two rural locations in Gisenyi *prefecture*. The research in the comparative sites focused exclusively on brick and tile makers,¹¹ while the research in the main field site also investigated households not engaged in brick and tile making.

The locations were chosen because of the great differences in land tenure, in political clout, and in the scale of the brick and tile industries between the northwest and the south. The field sites within each region were chosen because of the different markets they served and the different patterns of land-use they represented.

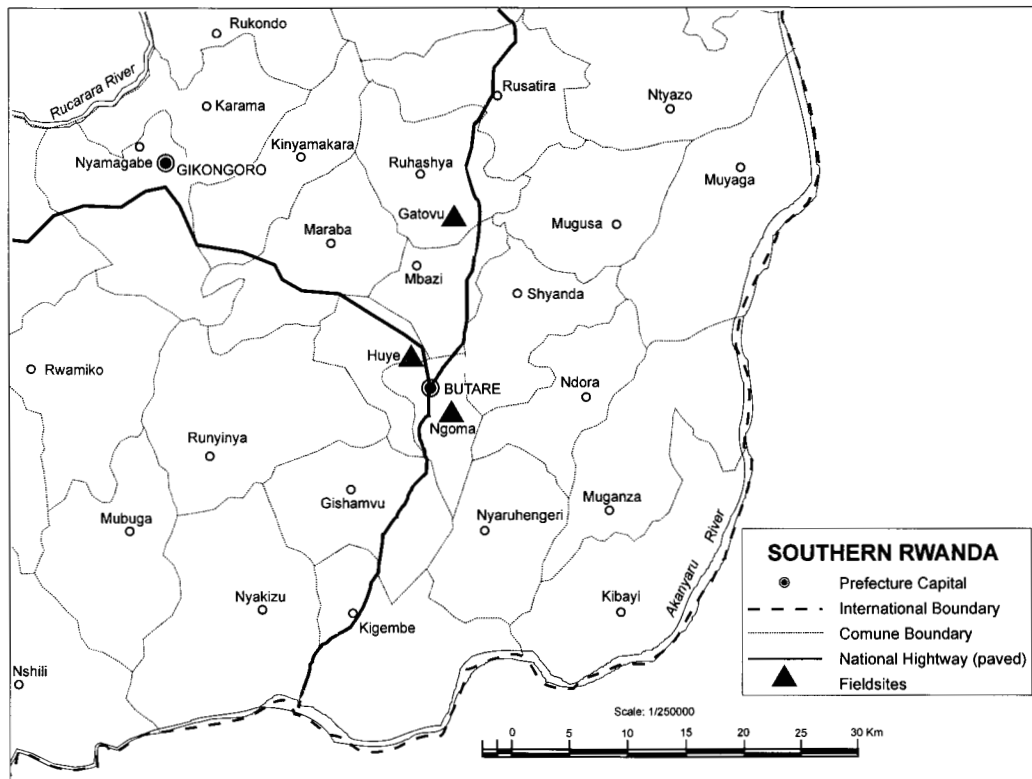
FIELD SITES IN BUTARE *PREFECTURE*

There were three field sites in Butare *prefecture* (see map 2). The first, the *secteur* of Gatovu, was located in a rural area and catered to a rural market. The

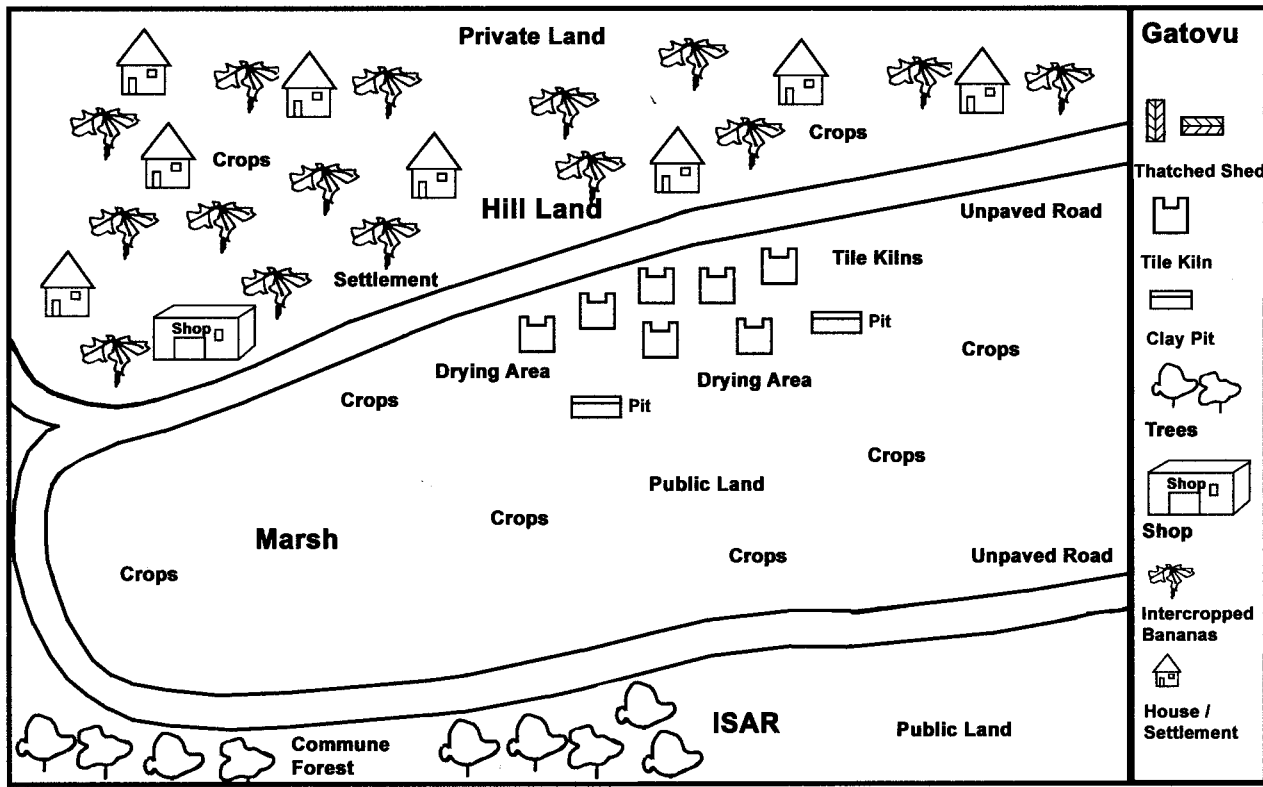
second was in the *commune urbaine* of Huye and catered to an affluent urban market. The third was located in the *commune urbaine* of Ngoma and catered to a poor peasant market. All of these enterprises operated only in the dry seasons that fell between the two rainy seasons during which the entrepreneurs and laborers worked on their farms. All used public lands for digging the clay and were confined to digging in small pits that were interspersed with small agricultural plots (see schemata 1–5). There was considerable variation in both the scale of enterprises, the products produced, and the strategies employed by the owners and workers in the different marshes and valley bottoms.

Gatovu

The *secteur* of Gatovu is situated in the *commune* of Ruhashya (see map 2). In 1983, it was comprised of approximately 500 homesteads scattered across two hills. Gatovu borders on the national north–south highway. The majority of brick- and tile-making concerns in Gatovu were very small and operated on government marshland. There was a cooperative, established by the government, which functioned only in name. All these industries specialized in roof tile production¹² while the cooperative in Gatovu, which became effectively defunct during the research period, produced both bricks and tiles on a somewhat larger scale. All of the facilities for brick and tile production were built on the government-controlled marsh and lower-hill slope lands. The tile kilns were the only permanent structures. All of the other structures, sheds, and workstations, were temporary and rebuilt each season. Clay was dug wet from small pits that were interspersed between small agricultural fields (see schema 1). Both the private industries and the cooperative catered to rural peasants or to rural small businesspeople, and sold tiles and bricks in small quantities. In Gatovu, between October 1984 and June 1986 my research assistant and I interviewed 51 people involved in brick and/or tile production in the marsh adjacent to the *secteur*.¹³ These informants represented almost all the people involved in brick and tile making in this marsh (3 declined to be interviewed). Eight were employed as workers for others; 1 always worked on his own; 16 usually worked alone, but occasionally hired labor and also occasionally worked for others; 20 fluctuated between working alone and hiring labor; 6 always hired labor and worked in the production process; and 1, a woman, always hired labor and never worked in the production process. None of these brick and roof tile makers were landless; all owned some farmland; all but 3 had access to marshland (government land) for agriculture and 15 also rented lands. All stopped working as soon as the rains started, arguing that they lost too much money during this season if they produced tiles and bricks, and gained more by working their agricultural lands.



MAP 2. Location of Field Sites in Southern Rwanda



SCHEMA 1. Schema of Gatovu Brickyards and Common Property Land Use

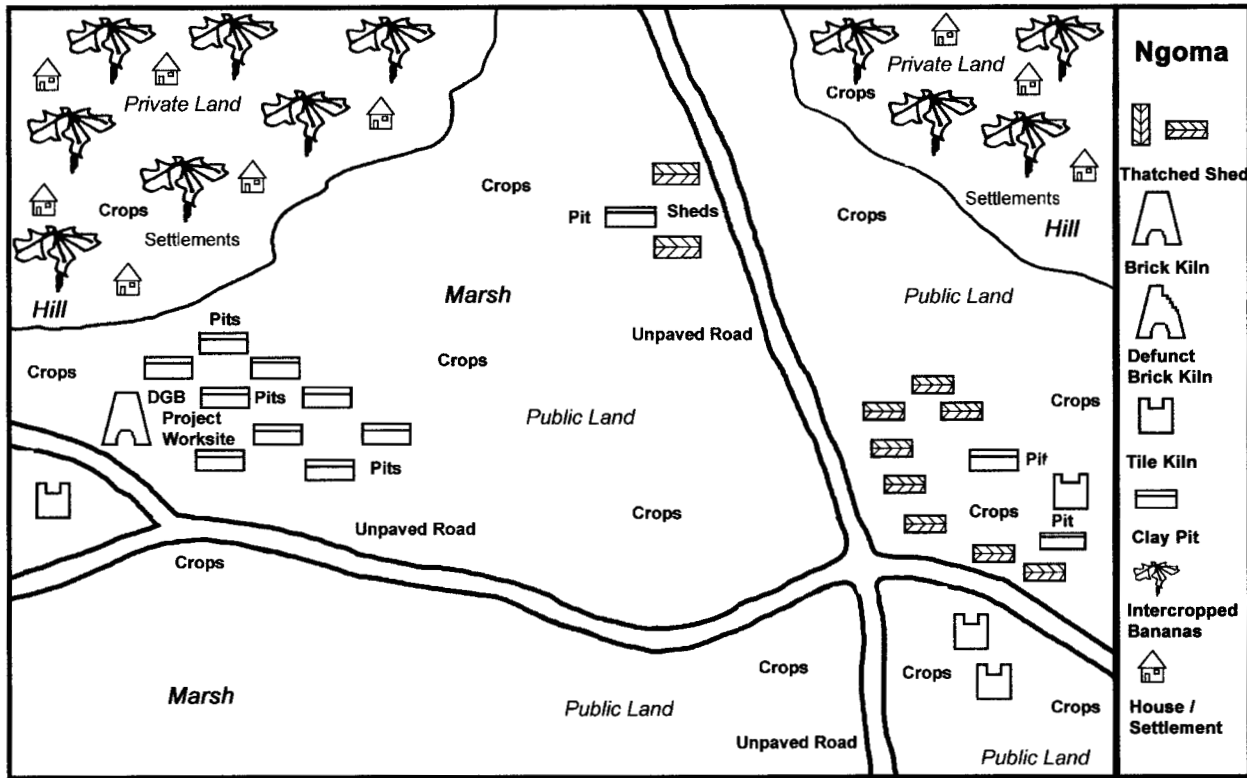
City of Butare: Ngoma and Huye

Between March 1985 and August 1986, my research assistant and I also worked in two marshes adjacent to the city of Butare in Butare *prefecture*. This city of approximately 15,000 is the second largest in the country. It is comprised of two *communes*, the *communes urbaines* of Ngoma and Huye (see map 2). Despite its “urban” status, the majority of the population lived on land they farmed and that provided the larger part of their livelihood. Access to land in these two marshes was very different in 1983, and these differences were reflected in the different scales of the industries and in the nature of the markets they served.

Ngoma. The marsh of Cyarwa-Cyimana in Ngoma is relatively far from a good paved road, and the population resembled that found in Gatovu. The majority living on its peripheries cultivated subsistence crops. The brick- and tile-making industries were mainly small enterprises, principally making roof tiles for a peasant market. Unlike Gatovu, there was one larger-scale brick-making industry that produced bricks on contract for a nongovernmental organization¹⁴ during the research period (see schema 2). The study centered on the small roof tile makers, most of whom were interviewed. Of the 19 informants, 1 worked completely alone producing unfired tiles, 1 worked only as a laborer for a man who held a monopoly over a portion of the marsh, while 14 habitually shared a workspace with others and fired a kiln with a group, very occasionally working alone, never hiring labor, and rarely working for others, and 1 always hired labor and never worked with his subordinates. Two men alternated between working with others and working for the major entrepreneur in the marsh. As in Gatovu, the workstations were temporary, the tile kilns were small permanent structures, and the clay was dug wet out of small pits found in the agricultural fields in the marsh. All of the men owned land, 10 also had access to agricultural marshlands, and 2 also rented land. None worked in the brick and tile industries in the rainy seasons.

Huye. Nyanza, the marsh in Huye, is situated at the junction of two paved roads, one being the international highway, the other the road to the border town of Cyangugu. On one side is a residential area comprised of expatriates, affluent Rwandans, and government civil servants. On the other side is a small middle-class and poor Rwandan residential area, a jam and juice factory, and two large missions. In 1983, the local population still engaged in considerable agricultural activity on this side of the marsh (see schema 3).

Between 1983 and 1988, there were four private enterprises concentrating on brick production: one employed between 70 and 100 workers, one employed 25 workers, one employed 20 workers, one employed 6 workers, and



SCHEMA 2. Schema of Ngoma Brickyards and Common Property Land Use

one was a cooperative of 11 persons.¹⁵ In addition, there were two large brickyards, one operated by the prison and one by the Gahinga-Muyaga Catholic Mission. In all, my assistant and I interviewed 36 men who represented only a portion of the brick makers in this marsh, all of whom were associated with the four private enterprises or the cooperative.¹⁶ One was an entrepreneur with 20 employees, 1 worked in the cooperative only, 34 were working or had worked as laborers, 7 of these workers had also once worked with a group as entrepreneurs, and 3 were members of the cooperative. As in the two previous field sites, the workstations were temporary wood and thatch lean-tos and clay was dug out of small rectangular pits; however, unlike the other two sites, the kilns were temporary, built for, and dismantled after, each firing (see the following discussion). The laborers worked only during the dry season, preferring to work on their own agricultural land during the rainy seasons. Because workers were hard to find and keep, most of the entrepreneurs entered into a contractual relationship with the workers who, although they were paid by piecework, negotiated a cash advance. All the workers owned land, 9 had access to marshland, and half rented land.

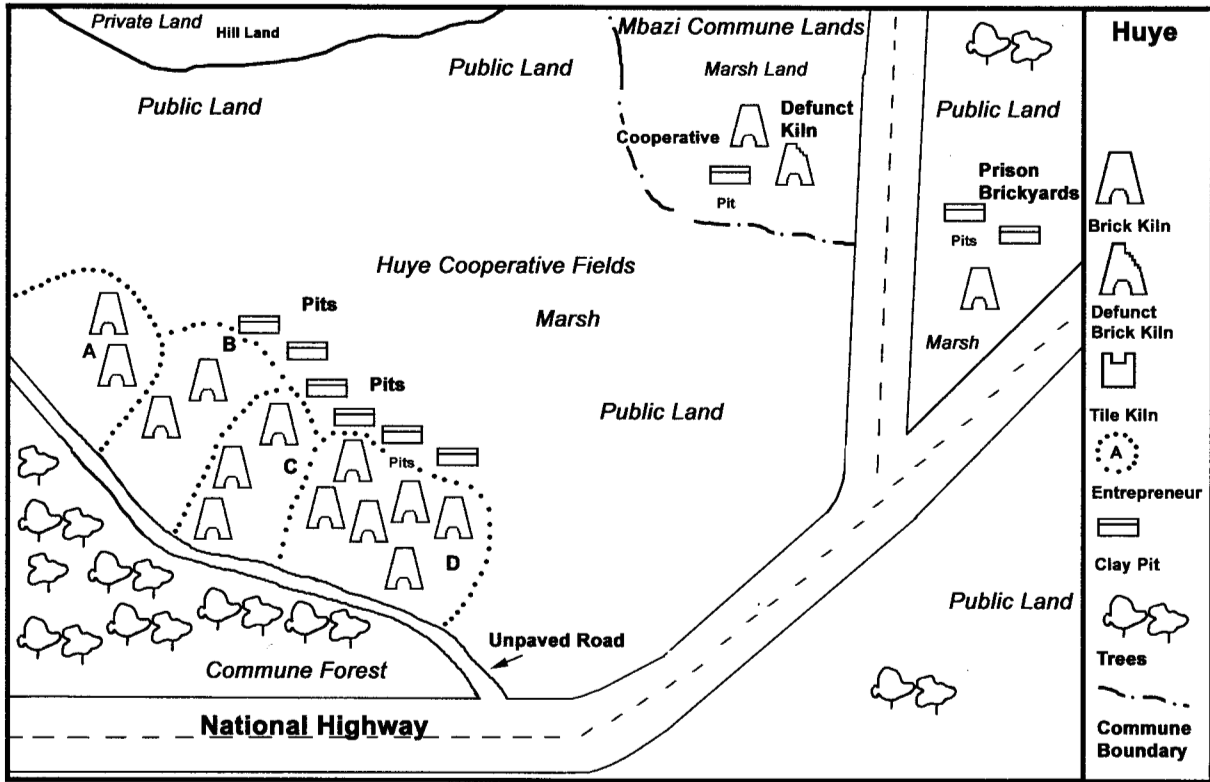
FIELD SITES IN GISENYI *PREFECTURE*

The two field sites in Gisenyi catered to two urban centers, Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, and to a large commercial agricultural area in Ruhengeri *prefecture* (see map 3). In the 1980s, most of the production was oriented toward the urban market of Gisenyi. Both of these locations are beside the main east-west highway: one on the edges of a large marsh, the other in a valley bottom. Although these sites are approximately 10 km from Gisenyi, they were, at that time, two of the closest brick-producing areas to the city. The research was done in the *secteurs* of Pfunda and Gisa over a three-month period between June and October 1985.

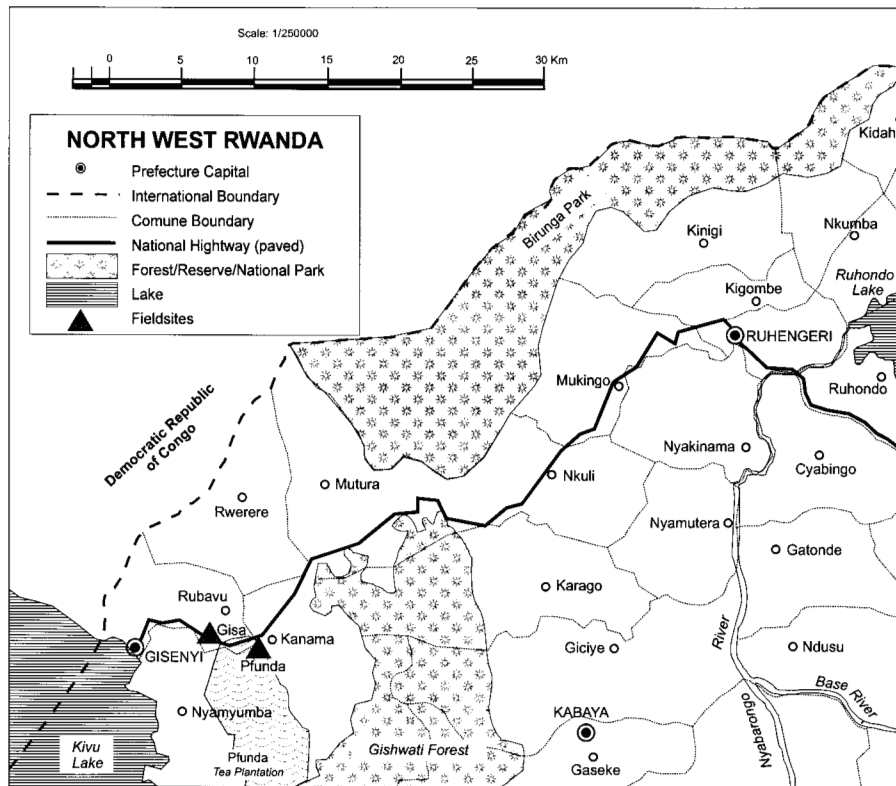
Pfunda

Pfunda is a marsh situated in the *secteur* of Kanama. Most of the marsh is occupied by a government-run tea plantation; however, there are a number of large entrepreneurs making both bricks and tiles in this marsh (see schema 4). In 1985, there were 10 enterprises and 1 functioning cooperative. I interviewed 4 of these entrepreneurs, 5 cooperative members, and 20 workers split between these enterprises. Of the 4 entrepreneurs, 2 employed between 70 and 150 workers, 1 employed up to 30 workers, and 1 worked alone producing unfired products.

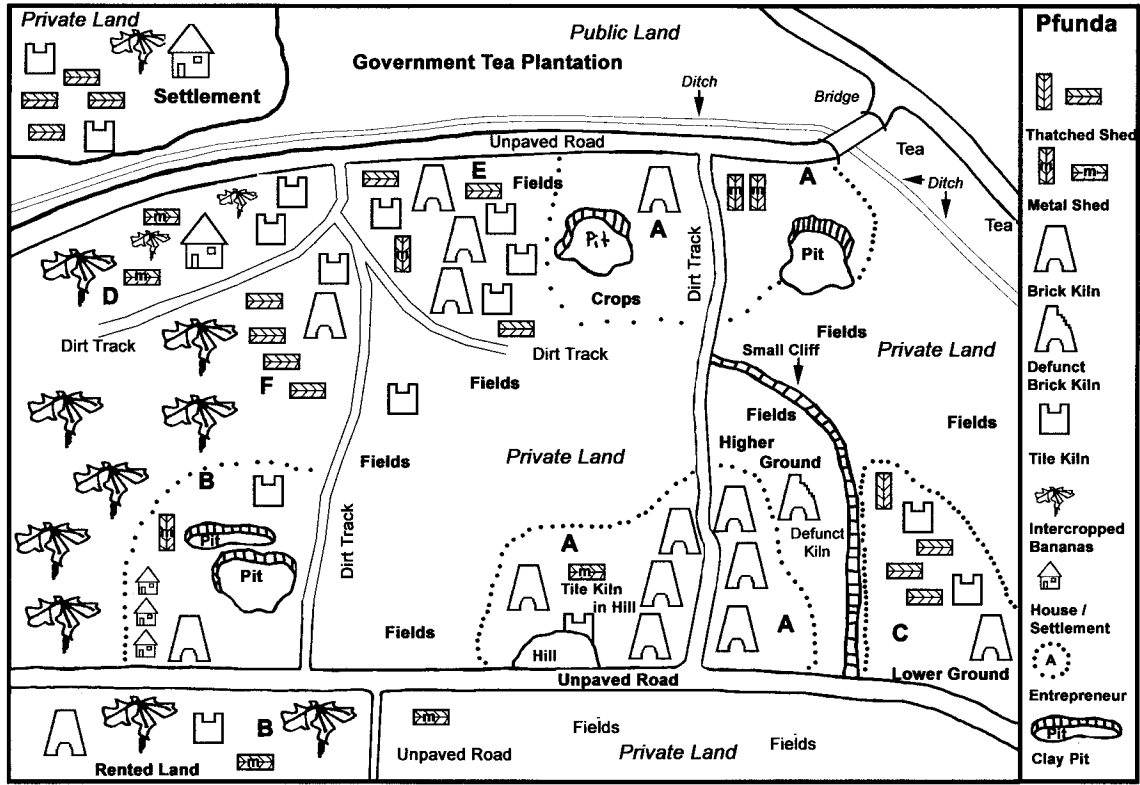
The work sites differed dramatically from those in the south. The workstations were built from galvanized iron and wood. Temporary brick kilns



SCHEMA 3. Schema of Huye and Common Property Land Use



MAP 3. Location of Field Sites in Northwest Rwanda



SCHEMA 4. Schema of Pfunda and Common Property Land Use

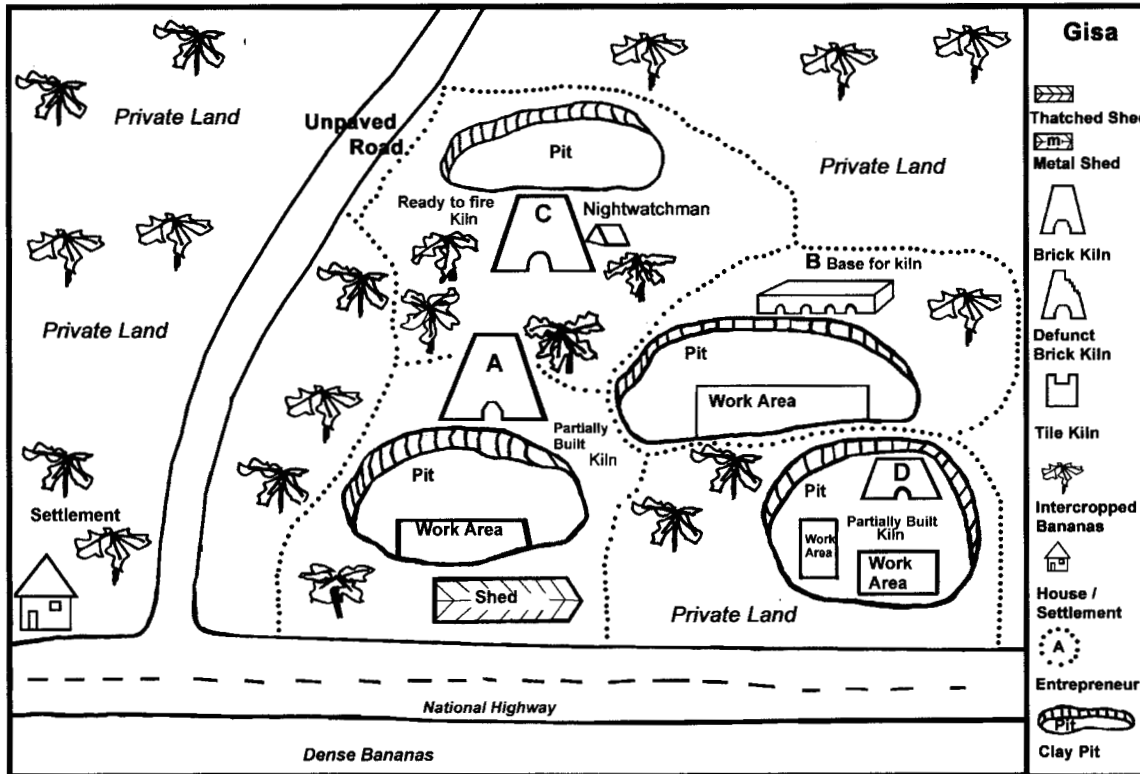
were built side by side with permanent small adobe tile kilns, and the clay was dug wet out of a large pit at each entrepreneur's brickyard. The 20 workers who were interviewed also differed from those in the south. Most laborers worked as long into the rainy seasons as possible. Two were landless and rented small plots, 14 had very small land holdings, and 16 farmed small land holdings and rented land. Of the 5 cooperative members, 3 described their holdings as small rented land. Despite these small holdings, 88 had to sell staples to meet cash needs,¹⁷ and none grew the major cash crop, coffee, which requires considerable cash inputs. All 4 of the entrepreneurs had sufficient fields and none rented land. These industries ran well into the rainy seasons and restarted as soon as the rains tailed off.

Gisa

Situated in a small valley bottom beside the main highway, Gisa had four large brick industries that employed between 5 and 15 men, depending on the season (see schema 5). All of these industries fired bricks only and all of the owners were absentee, living in either Gisenyi or Kigali, the capital. The laborers all worked as long into the rainy seasons as possible and usually stopped only because the owner stopped paying for the water carriers. These latter were needed because the clay here is dry when dug. All owned small plots of land and 10 rented land. Like the workers in Pfunda they did not grow lucrative cash crops such as coffee. In Pfunda and Gisa, the laborers only worked on a piecework system and only the most trusted could negotiate any cash advances. In both Pfunda and Gisa, the entrepreneurs also engaged night watchmen (*zamu*) to guard the tools and products.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book begins with a description of the technology used in the brick and roof tile industries in Rwanda, considering the most common forms of production technology, clamp kilns and adobe-walled intermittent tile kilns, and the labor processes. It argues that despite great variations in scale, and great differences in economies of scale, the technologies and labor processes used in both the large and the small industries were remarkably homogeneous in the 1980s. Chapter 2 analyzes the nature of labor organization in three forms of industry—small peasant production, large capitalist enterprise, and cooperatives—examining the impact of the regional differences in access to land, labor, and power in shaping labor relations. This chapter shows the bewildering variety of strategies used by these small industries: people working alone, people working in groups, and people selling their labor one season and hiring labor another. All of the large industries used a system of piecework. The



SCHEMA 5. Schema of Gisa and Common Property Land Use

cooperatives were modeled on both systems depending on the scale at which they worked and the region in which they operated. The small peasant-based industries and the capitalist industries were distinguished by the role the owners played in the production process and by their capacity to gain access to the means of production. In these small industries the workers and the owner worked side by side. The capacity of the owner to provide this labor was crucial to the survival of the enterprise. In the 1980s, these industries thrived in areas of universal access to clay land and catered to a poor peasant market that bought products on a very small scale. In contrast, the capitalist enterprises used a system of hired labor paid on a piecework basis. The owners of the enterprise rarely worked in the enterprise and few even supervised their work sites. The large entrepreneurs were most successful in the areas where access to clay land was controlled by clientage and where the owner had preferential access to large urban markets and capital. A number of cooperatives operated side by side with the other industries. Some were organized in a comparable manner to the small enterprises while others were modeled on the large enterprises. This chapter argues that the existence and organization of these cooperatives reflected the nature of government policy and the role of clientage in access to resources.

Chapter 3 maintains that the history of centralization of land, resources, and power; the development of regional diversity; the transformation of the lineage system; gender relations; the recasting of ethnicity in precolonial and colonial Rwanda; and the recasting of these structures in the postcolonial state have profoundly influenced the development of the brick- and tile-making industries in Rwanda and the organization of labor found in Rwanda. It examines the historical development of land tenure, labor relations, and clientage in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, and the impact of these processes on land tenure and access to resources, and then considers the ways in which these changes molded gender relations and the role that gender relations played in the reproduction of these industries. Chapter 4 contends that transformation of paternal control over resources and the impact of precolonial and colonial social relations produced a situation in which a household head could not control the labor of grown children. It examines the availability of household labor, and considers the role of subsistence agricultural production in the reproduction of small industries, wage labor, and the household in Rwanda arguing that family members in Rwanda did not necessarily see themselves as undertaking a collective family project. While family labor in brick and tile production was conspicuous by its absence, the role of women's labor in agriculture was crucially important for the reproduction of these enterprises. Women, who rarely owned critical resources, were responsible for household subsistence, while men had the right to control the farm products but did not have to contribute to household subsistence. In

almost every case, the small peasant producers and pieceworkers in the study lived in households that produced most of the foodstuffs consumed by the household. Therefore, this chapter also analyzes the development of gender relations in Rwanda and considers the role of women's subsistence agricultural production in the reproduction of labor in these industries. It illustrates the ways in which the surplus produced by women was critical to the operation of the small peasant industries and underwrote the reproduction of the pieceworkers in the larger industries.

Chapter 6 considers the specific cases of three women who have established capitalist brick and tile enterprises, regarding their situation in the light of the literature on class and gender in Africa. It has been suggested that understanding access to critical resources forms a sufficient foundation for analyzing the relationship between class and gender. This chapter argues that the control and use of surplus are equally important and that any analysis of class and gender must encompass all aspects of the social relations of production in a specific historical and cultural context. It highlights the consequences of this history for women and for class relations at both the macro- and microlevels, beginning with the wider context and ending with analysis of specific case studies.

Although many of the specific brick and roof tile industries in this study no longer exist because of the 1994 genocide, the conditions and history that shaped the nature of labor organization and the logic of these industries, coupled with civil war and structural adjustment, molded the politics of genocide in Rwanda. Chapter 7 builds on the analyses of Chapters 1–6 and examines the role of class, regional politics, power, land tenure, and clientage in establishing the circumstances leading to the genocide and in the formation of the postgenocide regime in Rwanda. This chapter shows how these factors led to a situation where when the regime of Habyarimana found itself beleaguered that it turned to ethnic violence as an answer to its problems. It shows how the three conundrums of Rwandan political life fed into a mind-set that made genocide a solution to its political problems. It finishes by demonstrating how the current regime continues to perpetuate the structures that led to genocide.