

PART 1



Historiography

BUSHI AND THE HISTORIANS

Historiographical Themes in Eastern Kivu

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The form in which history is presented matters. Written historiographies in eastern Kivu were originally colonial historiographies: they drew on the cultural paradigms and intellectual assumptions of the colonial mindset, and they privileged themes important to colonial thinking—"race," migration, royal genealogies, and social hierarchy. Internal cultural change and local agency were often neglected. This chapter considers four influential examples of such literature in Bushi, a densely populated region (including seven kingdoms) southwest of Lake Kivu. In addition to tracing out the themes of colonial historiography, the essay illustrates two other aspects of historical writing in this region: its dependence on Rwandan historiography, and the tendency of such works to become increasingly condensed and more simplified over time, not more expansive, diverse, and open to new themes. More recently, research carried out since decolonization has transformed these images. Rather than reaffirming homogeneous ("tribal") histories, local research has demonstrated the broad diversity of historical perceptions that exist within cultural groups. Furthermore, the presentation of history in this region within Rwandan models has not been validated: kingship has been shown to have developed autonomously within Bushi, and the ritual foundations of states west of Lake Kivu have been shown to have been essential to

the intellectual foundations of kingship in Rwanda—rather than the reverse. In short, the deep influences appear to have moved in the opposite direction from those assumed in colonial histories. Yet even with greater respect for autonomous local histories and more detailed empirical evidence in recent research, it is nonetheless important to note the characteristics of earlier historiographical presentations to account for their effects and to recognize the momentous changes to accrue in the generation since decolonization.

HISTORICAL STUDIES OF KIVU are still in their very infancy. Recent work has been carried out in Bufulero, Bushi, Buhavu, and Bunande, but, lacking the results of these studies, historians working from published materials have very few sources at their disposal. Existing sources include works by Colle, Moeller, Willame, and Cuypers, with the latter two based primarily on the former, at least in their historical dimensions. Because the sources are so few and are essentially similar, little critical attention has been given them; by constant citation and repetition they have become hallowed as truth and used as a basis for teaching and university theses. By this process such essentially colonial interpretations have become entrenched in the historical ontology of the region. This chapter proposes to review some of the written sources in light of current research in the region, by first presenting certain themes that appear to have guided earlier historical inquiry and then discussing the works of four influential authors in light of these themes.

The first attempts to record historical traditions in the Kivu area were influenced by earlier studies of Rwanda that emphasized the centralized and hierarchical nature of the Rwandan state. Many of the early missionaries and priests in Kivu, men to whom contemporary researchers owe much for their accumulated sources, had close contacts with the seminaries and published work in Rwanda. In most works, Rwanda was seen as the end development for other states in the region, and prominence was given to those historical factors that were assumed to have had a common impact throughout the area. Because early writings on Kivu focused on the similarities of the Kivu states with Rwanda, rather than on their differences, the Rwandan political and social system as described in these early sources became the model for later studies in Bushi, and especially in the most centralized of the Kivu states at the time of European arrival. Bushi, in turn, and for much the same reason, became a kind of prototype for other states in eastern Kivu.

Perhaps more important in guiding the sociological interests of the day was the nature of the colonial situation itself, based on the premises of race, class, and social stratification. The justification and success of the colonial policy of indirect rule required the identification of African “traditional” rulers with sufficient powers over the population to enforce colonial administrative policy. Where these powers were found to be insufficient, indeed where authorities suitable to the colonial purpose were found not to exist at all, these had to be created to conform to the exigencies of colonial policy—the effective administration of the area. On the model of Europe, it was believed that centralization and administrative efficiency were best assured through an aristocratic class to “guide” (*diriger*) the rest of the population.

Such pervasive assumptions—and the policies based on them—came to be increasingly reflected in many African colonial societies of eastern Kivu. Both European administrators and African beneficiaries of such reinforced powers justified them by recourse to indirect rule and appeal to concepts of a “traditional” system. As a result, from the 1930s works on Kivu presented a picture of the several societies as being each ruled by a “classe dirigeante” with close affinities to the corresponding class in the other societies throughout the region. As also in colonial society, class differences and consequently the whole system of social stratification in the lacustrine area (including eastern Kivu), were explained by racial factors: within any given society the different classes were seen to represent different racial groups, each endowed with certain inalienable cultural traits.

But while the presence of vertical strata may have been one of the most important characteristics noted in some sources, other early written works focused on discrete ethnic groups, each apparently geographically distinct from the other. As with the concepts applied to stratified class layers, these ethnic units were frequently seen as unchanging over time and without significant internal variation; such concepts of a static and homogeneous society are illustrated in the common phrases “traditional Shi society” and “the oral tradition of the Shi.” Thus, while attempting to identify sociological differences for the various component groups, sources of this type nonetheless frequently accepted traditions of the current royal family (or a segment of it) as the only legitimate (and fixed) historical tradition for the group as a whole, thereby ignoring the composite sociological, regional, or occupational groups within a society, each of which may have different histories (or different interpretations of a common history).

One result of this reliance on a single body of presumably fixed tradition was that the social groups postulated in the models were often presented as having

existed, more or less in a constant relationship to each other, and social change was thereby minimized. The underlying assumption was that a given group possessed a unique identifiable culture (or at least certain culture traits) that seldom changed and hence could always be associated with that group. Because culture was viewed as static, "history" considered only the initial formation of these societies; the study of history was therefore concerned almost exclusively with the geographic movements of the groups involved (i.e., the movement of certain culture traits) and their arrival in the area, and ultimately with the quest for the geographic origins of the culture traits and the people that carried them. Because the social dynamics of migrations were not considered to have altered social structure, a migrating people arrived with just about the same social structure as they had possessed on departing from their homeland.

Another problem associated with this form of historical "explanation" is the difficulty in most cases of attributing to any single group a given sociological input into a culture. Even where individual cultural elements can be identified with a particular people, these become part of a larger culture only by a process of adaptation and integration that affects both the absorbing culture and the trait absorbed. Rather than considering the transformations brought about by the organic nature of a culture and the interrelation of its elements, the early writings on Kivu frequently explained cultural complexity by the combination of discrete and clearly defined culture traits resulting from the simple superposition of diverse "racial" groups in a single area. Such analyses assumed that the presence of any particular trait can be (or rather must be) explained by the influx of a certain racial stock associated with that trait. By isolating the composite culture traits of the society and determining which characteristics were associated with which racial group, this form of analysis explained the formation of the composite society by the nature of the hierarchy of these different "racial" (i.e., cultural) stocks.

In addition to problems associated with theoretical assumptions, such an analysis also presents the more practical problem of arbitrarily defining a point of origin for the migrating people. According to this form of historical inquiry, every people must have originated from some previous "homeland"; every homeland in turn was itself a point of arrival for a previous migration. The historian, then, had to decide which point, of several possibilities throughout the history of these people, will be legitimately considered as their ultimate origin.

More recent thinking on the history of Africa, of course, has progressed far beyond such migration monomania, and even within migration studies there

have been significant changes in approach. While migration theory has been frequently overemphasized and misused in the earlier works, population movements have nonetheless formed an important part of Africa's past, and their study at a more narrowly defined level still represents a legitimate field of historical inquiry. More recent study has focused on the form and nature of the population movements rather than on simple existence or geographic parameters. Because it is currently assumed that cultures as well as population placement were significantly altered by the process of such movement and subsequent sedentarization, the diverse forms of population movements and cultural interactions are seen to be as important as origins themselves in influencing the resulting social composition and organization of the mobile populations. In addition, historians have only recently begun asking questions such as which geographical landmarks are remembered and which time periods were involved in such movements. They have also started to grapple with the problem of identifying the composition of participating segments: how coherent as historical units are contemporary social units (e.g., "clans"), and how have identity concepts and symbols changed over time? The kind of highly intensive study necessary to account for the historical complexity of the more general pattern of slow movements and countercurrents, usually composed of very small (family) groups and moving for many different possible reasons, has been carried out only in very few areas of Africa.

Thus earlier historiographical works on Kivu portrayed a series of immigrant waves of coherent discrete populations, each one the "possessor" of unchanging culture traits, each one establishing in its turn a distinct class over the other, and with little social interaction between them. This form of analysis tended to emphasize cultural (and hence racial) hierarchies, and in doing so reflected the colonial situation itself. Because stratification was conveniently explained by a conquest theory of state formation and cultural evolution, this theory also served to justify the violence accompanying the establishment of colonial rule; hence the "rights" of colonial powers could be argued on the basis of the (colonially inspired) "traditional" history of the region. With these general observations in mind, we will consider some of the more influential studies on the history of eastern Kivu, in reverse chronological order.

PERHAPS THE most important of the recent works to serve as an introduction to the history and sociology of eastern Kivu is that of J.-B. Cuypers.¹ Because of its suitability for schools and universities, this publication had an important

influence in postcolonial Zaire. As a whole, Cuypers provides a useful summary of the cultures of the area, especially on the material culture of Bushi. The present discussion will be limited to a consideration of the historical section of the work, which constitutes only a small portion of the total presentation.

Based primarily on Moeller, Cuypers's historical reconstruction postulates an autochthonous Twa (pygmy) group and subsequent waves of immigrants forming layers of stratified social classes that seem to apply to the region as a whole. The first two migrations are dated (without sources) to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This dating probably derives from Moeller, although Cuypers offers no explanation as to how such dates were in fact arrived at.² According to Cuypers (and Moeller), the first of these immigrations was that of the Lega; the second, more composite, "comprenait surtout les Yira [Nande], les Hunde, les Nyanga, les Havu, les Shi, et les Furiiru, mais également les Hutu du Rwanda et du Burundi."³ The "origins" of these migrations are inferred from Nyanga and Nande traditions (some apparently more recent than Moeller). While noting that other traditions do not refer specifically to identical origins, Cuypers's account implies that Nyanga- and Nande-cited origins are broadly valid for all the peoples of the area. Unfortunately, no consideration is given to the process of ethnic differentiation among the various defined segments of this postulated single, vast immigrant community.

Again, it is not clear in this presentation whether the ruling families arrived with the subordinate groups—thus performing a kind of "social transplant" from western Uganda to eastern Kivu—or after the establishment of other "racial" groups in the area—thus forming different strata based on different immigrant groups. However, the reference to "cette classe dirigeante" strengthens the notion of a single group whose members became rulers among the different peoples of the region, a group composed of "chefs d'origine hamite (ou galla, ou éthiopide)."⁴ The apparent similarity among ruling classes of many of these states is explained in unequivocally historical terms: "Les traditions [which traditions?] donnent une origine commune aux familles regnantes des Shi, des Havu, des Furiiru, et des Rwanda."⁵ Moreover, the claimed affinity among various royal families noted above explicitly excludes the Hunde, Nande, Nyanga, Tembo, and others whose political organizations differ from the Furiiru, Havu, Shi, and Rwanda. Because the extent of (or even possibility of) internal development is neglected and because of a postulated common migration, one is left with the supposition that the ruling families of the latter group, forming a discrete unit among themselves, immigrated separately from the popu-

lation. However, appeal to common historical origins and the stereotyped use of “biological terminology” (e.g., that of brotherhood) to express shared social identity among royal families of neighboring states are common features in the historiography of the area. It is therefore of questionable validity to employ this reasoning to posit multiple migrations that serve in turn to explain social stratification in the area.

Cuypers’s later work on the Shi of Katana places less emphasis on the origins of peoples and social classes, but his conception of “histoire” still seems closely synonymous to that of “origines.” He includes a useful short summary of the relevant works of Colle and Moeller, noting the differences between these two presentations. According to Cuypers, Colle postulated a simple succession of migrations, each one composed of a different racial group and establishing a new social layer above the previous population, thus forming the social stratification found in the area today. Moeller, on the other hand, presented several immigrations, each of which included the three “associated” populations of “Hamites,” “Bantu,” and Twa. In this way, Moeller deferred the historical problem of the formation of social stratification to a period prior to the migrations themselves, and therefore outside the limits of his analysis.

Remarking that “les origines historiques des Shi ne sont encore connues que de façon imprécise et parfois contradictoire,” Cuypers rightly mitigates the importance of racial characteristics in contemporary Shi society.⁶ He implies, though, that this has resulted from a degeneration of an earlier situation: “Les Luzi [members of the royal family] ne forment qu’une infime partie de la population et il ne semble actuellement plus possible de les distinguer physiquement des Shi [commoners].”⁷ Despite this, Cuypers cites works by Hiernaux, writing that Hiernaux distinguished between Luzi and Shi (or commoners), finding the Luzi closer to the Tutsi and the Shi closer to Hutu in physical characteristics: “J. Hiernaux, l’anthropologue physique qui a fait leur examen, rapproche les Shi proprement dits des Hutu du Rwanda et les Luzi des Tuutsi.”⁸

In fact, Hiernaux rarely mentioned the Luzi at all, and while he did refer to them as “le même élément” as the Tutsi, he applied this more to sociological than to physical characteristics: “un aristocratie très limitée qui détient les hautes charges.”⁹ In places it is difficult to determine whether Hiernaux’s statements were based on the scientific analysis of physical characteristics or on his preconceptions of the “history” of the region, as presented in the introductory comments to his work. For example, since Hiernaux accepted Moeller’s conception of a “communauté d’origine” for both the “Shi” and “Hutu,” his reference to Luzi

as “*apparentés aux Batuutsi*” may be interpreted as referring to historical rather than biological affinities (also based on Moeller’s hypothesis), though this is nowhere clearly stated.¹⁰ Furthermore, despite reference to general “*traits éthiopi- des*,” nowhere in his empirical presentation did Hiernaux discuss the physiological characteristics of the Luzi, and certainly not on pages 13–20 as cited by Cuypers. We are not even told if Luzi formed a part of his empirical sample, though his earlier narrow application of the term “Shi” to refer exclusively to non-Luzi (or nonroyal) elements of Shi society would imply that Luzi were excluded from his sample; no distinction is given in his results. Similarly, another reference to Hiernaux, cited by Cuypers in the same context, makes no mention at all of the Luzi as distinct from the Shi; there is only reference to the “Tuutsi.”¹¹

Without denying the potential utility of Hiernaux’s work for historians, and leaving aside the problem of the Tutsi, it is clear that Cuypers’s citations are faulty. It appears, for instance, that he interpreted the word “Tuutsi” to mean “Luzi” in every case; but this racial equation was the very premise he was attempting to prove in citing Hiernaux. Given the cited evidence, therefore, it is a misrepresentation to postulate a social stratification in Bushi that is “semblable” to that of Rwanda based on putative racial similarities, and consequently to postulate historical ties between the Luzi and Tutsi classes—“*nous pouvons dire des castes—qui correspondent en partie à des coupures physico-anthropologiques*.”¹²

Cuypers recognizes that social stratification in Bushi has often been presented in terms that make it seem close to that in Rwanda. But there is no attempt to analyze just how the earlier and very prolific writings on Rwanda have influenced later analyses of Kivu states, especially the Shi and Havu states. He seems to accept the similarities entirely, and to portray Bushi as similar to Rwanda simply *because* Rwanda is better understood: “*la comparaison avec le Rwanda s’impose car elle est fort bien connue*.”¹³ Justification for doing so is based on two arguments: that both these societies are similarly structured into three different classes, and that in each society these classes are of unequal size. But it is not really sufficient to note that Rwanda and Bushi each have three numerically unequal classes, that they share geographical contiguity and supposed racial and historical affinities, and therefore to assert that “*la stratification sociale qui existe chez les Shi est, dans son essence, la même que celle que l’on trouve au Rwanda*.”¹⁴

It appears, then, that in the absence of empirical historical data to establish common Hamitic, Galla, or Ethiopian origins (are these intended as synonymous or alternative terms?) for the several ruling classes in the lacustrine area, general cultural similarities (or at least common social rank) has been accepted as proof

of common historical origins. This a priori acceptance of shared origins has led to an overemphasis on similarities of certain cultural features such as social stratification, especially as these developed during the colonial period. Such circular reasoning seems to derive from the belief that certain culture traits (such as “royalty” or “social stratification”) belong uniquely to a particular group and therefore that the presence of this given element can be explained by the presence of, or direct contact with, the possessor group.

In fact, there are important differences in systems of social stratification between Bushi and Rwanda and between Bushi and other regions of Kivu—and the differences may well be greater than the similarities. The cultural differences, political prerogatives, and numerical size of the aristocratic class in Bushi are all much smaller than is the case for Rwanda; so small as to make artificial any arbitrary characterization of social stratification as such. In Bushi the Luzi form only a part of one clan, which is not a “ruling clan,” but the clan to which the king belongs; in Rwanda, Tutsi are found as composite elements of nearly every clan. “Luzi” seems to be a term more determined by political characteristics (proximate agnatic descent from a king and legitimate exercise of power) than sociological classifications (clans), despite the fact that it is an inherited position. Furthermore, as presented by Cuypers, the Shi political system was organized in terms of territorial divisions only, with very broad political power delegated to subordinates within a given region.¹⁵ In Rwanda the system included the delegation of restricted functions, overlapping powers, and interlocking domains. For such a brief treatment of social stratification in Bushi, the very fact that Cuypers was forced to rely on studies of Rwanda is itself witness to the poverty of primary empirical sources for Bushi.¹⁶

ANOTHER RECENT work, again one with wide influence within Zaire, is that by J.-C. Willame.¹⁷ As applied to Bushi, the historical section of this study falls into some of the same difficulties we have seen above. The idea of conquest and of the Luzi as a conquering group in Bushi, apparently of different origins and race from the rest of the population, are presented more directly here than in Cuypers’s works, but, alas, without references: “Au XVII^e siècle . . . les peuplades habitant le Bushi actuelle furent conquises par les clans Baluzi [*sic*] . . . Les Baluzi s’installèrent puis consolidèrent leur pouvoir sur les Bashi.”¹⁸ Here again are the elements of a necessary correlation between cultural elements and race. Here Tutsi influence is “proven” by the presence of clientship: “Les influences Tuutsi se révèlent notamment par le développement d’un système de clientèle.”¹⁹

But Willame's historical presentation is intended only as a very short (one-page) background to political events in the region immediately following independence, and needs to be understood in this light.²⁰ His main theme is the juxtaposition of the new elite with the "authorités coutumières."²¹ Willame's portrayal of internal Shi politics therefore seeks to illustrate, if not establish, the strong local political base controlled by the *mwami* (king), Kabare, during the early 1960s. In order to emphasize the important role of the *mwami*, to explain how "le *mwami* disposait d'un pouvoir populaire important à Bukavu, dans sa chefferie et chez les Bashi en générale," Willame portrays the Shi political system in these terms: "Une des caractéristiques les plus importantes du system socio-politique des Bashi réside en effet dans la souveraineté absolue et omni-présente du *Mwami*."²²

As far as political relations with outsiders are concerned (including the colonial administration and the Kivu provincial authorities), it is clear that the overwhelming identification of the population was indeed with their *mwami*, as Willame states. But in terms of internal Shi politics and the domestic powers of the *mwami*, his argument is far from true. Willame recognizes as much when he refers to the "rivalités continues" and the "désagrégation politique de la classe conquérante" in reference to the internal politics of Bushi.²³ On the other hand, Willame skillfully explains Kabare's political ineffectiveness and total misunderstanding of the nature and processes of provincial politics by drawing on elements of Kabare's personal history: his unwillingness to enter into the new and wider political arena during colonial rule, and his exile during the greater part of the colonial period, especially during the important changes of the 1950s.

As with all works used as sources by the historian, Willame's essay must be understood and analyzed in light of the purposes for which it was written; it was not intended as a source for historical studies, nor is it suitable for this purpose. While I am in no way minimizing the contribution of this study to our understanding of politics in Zaire, it needs to be recognized that Willame's characterization of the political system of Bushi is applicable only to a small segment of political activity, and may not be a fair representation of Bushi as a whole. Furthermore, because Willame cites few references in his work, there is little possibility of evaluating the conclusions presented, and thus Willame's unsupported historical assertions can be accepted only with the greatest reserve and restraint.

FOR MANY of these arguments, the principal point of departure is the impressive work by Moeller. Basing his work on data collected by colonial administrators during the 1920s and 1930s, Moeller had access to a quantity of enormously

valuable historical material, much of which cannot be recovered today. The later sections of the book, which consider the political institutions and ritual bases of several Kivu societies, attest to the enormous value of such data. The present discussion is concerned only with the historical presentation and particularly with some of the assumptions that guided the historical reconstruction advanced by Moeller; doing so reflects no intent to reflect on the value of the ethnographic sections of the work.

Unfortunately, in the collection of these data the testimonies and traditions were not preserved in their original form, thus impairing their value for later historians. In certain cases, however, Moeller did indicate the nature and quality of his data, a fact that is of great aid in evaluating his conclusions. Among others, he noted the sources and limitations of data for the Lega, the Hunde, and the Shi.²⁴ Furthermore, and perhaps even more important, Moeller occasionally made clear the multiplicity and variations of oral traditions, resulting in part from the composite nature of the societies involved: “Ces légendes donnent lieu à des variantes très appréciables lorsqu’on les recueille à la source. . . . Quant à la légende des origines, nous en avons des versions difficilement conciliables.”²⁵

While acknowledging the differences likely to arise in oral accounts, Moeller nonetheless viewed them as variants of a single original tradition that had degenerated over time. He consequently tended to combine different versions in order to reconcile the data to a single tradition valid for the entire ethnic group he is considering.²⁶ The same synthetic process was carried out at yet a higher level, where Moeller attempted to combine variant traditions from quite diverse ethnic groups over the entire region of Kivu, after having previously discounted specific variant traditions at the local level. Thus he selected traditions according to his a priori migration schema. For example, according to Moeller’s account (based on royal traditions), most clans in Bushi arrived from Lwindi, southwest of Bushi; following this analysis, the postulated migration to Lwindi from an earlier dispersal center must have included the same social elements found in Bushi presently, that is, an association of “Hamite,” “Bantu,” and “Twa.” Variants in the traditions may indeed represent a degeneration (either through simplification or elaboration) of a single original tradition. But they may also represent valid differences in historical experiences and interpretation. These differences may appear in similar forms either because expressed in a similar cultural and literary medium or because of interchange among traditions.

The enormous amount of local data in Moeller points to clear historical distinctions between the peoples whose kings claim historical associations to Lwindi (Shi, Havu, Fulero), those without such claims (Nyanga, Kumu, Hunde),

and those to which Moeller assigns direct contact and origins in western Uganda (the Nande states). These historical differentiations, so apparent in Moeller's work, are associated with different cultural dispersal areas and reinforced by other cultural distinctions (in politics, kinship, and ritual structure, as well as in material culture) that historians interested in Kivu would do well to note. But Moeller tended to overlook the significance of these different dispersal areas by applying the same historical framework of migration from a few "models" to the entire Kivu region and by assuming that the various separate dispersal areas simply succeeded each other and therefore represented successive stages within a single migratory system. Thus, despite (or because of?) the paucity of direct historical data to this effect from areas other than Bunande, Moeller extended some unspecified Nande traditions of origin in Bunyoro to the entire region.²⁷ Such an extension was clearly a conscious assumption on his part, for he also specifically denied that the Hunde and Nyanga claimed origins in Bunyoro.²⁸ This is significant, for others have since claimed that Hunde/Nyanga traditions recount a Nyoro origin.²⁹ Given the lack of specific source citations in the written works, the possibility of direct feedback cannot be determined unequivocally.³⁰ However, it is likely, given Moeller's interests and position, that his account denying traditions of explicit Nyoro origins drew on "the ruling classes." (Certainly some members of the African elite later used Moeller's book to justify their position within the colonial context, since during my fieldwork I was shown mimeographed résumés of the work.) The contradictory accounts of Nyoro origin therefore probably represent a distinct change in the general corpus of the traditions, rather than simply regional or social variants. Moeller's influence among the Belgian administrators in the area, the pervasive quality of administrative hierarchy in this region, and the particular relationship of administrators and local elites all ensured that *Les grandes lignes* affected later dynastic traditions to some degree.³¹ This is especially true in areas such as Buhunde and Bunyanga, where local political traditions tend to be of extremely shallow historical depth—genealogies of three or four generations being the norm.

It is also possible, of course, that earlier Hunde traditions did cite Nyoro origins and that these were not reported by Moeller, perhaps in deference to the boundary disputes between the British and Belgian administrations common early in the century; in general, the Africans near the border were keenly aware of such issues, and such assertions could be drawn on to aggravate colonial claims. But this possibility would itself indicate the sensitivity of "dynastic" traditions to contemporary political perceptions. Whether Moeller's account is accurate or

not, it is clear that the independent character of the local source is compromised either by feedback or by political influences—or both. Consequently, more recent traditions on the distant dynastic past, especially the migratory past, can be used to confirm or revise earlier recorded sources only with due caution.

Moeller's quest for "origins," his preoccupation with long-distance migrations, and their predetermined general direction of movement raise certain problems concerning the interrelation of various levels of analysis. Moeller's methodology assumed that general regional trends in the movement of the Bantu-speaking peoples can be directly translated into local patterns of immigration and settlement of contemporary peoples. But in terms of influence on later historical reasoning, what is more serious is the use of an apparently automatic response mechanism within a preconceived general hypothesis, applied in a mechanistic fashion and in the absence of more empirical data. By this reasoning, it was necessary only to find a cause in order to postulate the migration that had already been established as effect: "La pousée Shilluk-Dinka . . . mit en mouvement les Bantous de l'Entre-Albert-Victoria. . . . Plus tard, vers le milieu du XVII^e siècle, les Hamites Bashwezi, déthronés par les Babito et refoulés vers le sud, ont mis en mouvement les migrations consécutives Bahunde, Banande, Bahutu, etc."³²

Furthermore, as portrayed by Moeller the migration process itself was not what one would expect based on known comparative examples. His migrations, composed of unchanging population elements, travel from one spot to another almost in a planned itinerary.

De la sécheresse même de cette documentation se dégage une évocation, celle de ces hordes humaines en mouvement, qui n'est pas sans grandeur. Elles se sont mises en marche à l'approche du danger. . . . Les clans cadets—c'est une règle invariable—sont parties les premiers chargés de vivres; les aînés s'arrachèrent les derniers de la terre où ils laissent les sépultures de leurs morts. Les cadets s'établissent en avant, préparent les cultures qui permettront au gros de la tribu de subsister en attendant que les uns et les autres soient à nouveau délogés de ces installations. . . . Les stations . . . ne durent pas toujours le temps d'une génération.³³

It is all fiction. Migrations roughly similar to the type postulated by Moeller may be present in the history of Africa—witness the Ngoni—but they have been rare and have tended of necessity to be composed of very democratic elements, as a result of the rapid "turnover" of population caused by some groups (or families)

dropping off, and new groups constantly being incorporated and assimilated during the migration. Furthermore, while the “migration” itself may continue, the actual individuals involved may change many times over, for the military basis and mobility of these long-distance migrations made it difficult to sustain a coherent system of social stratification during the long journey. In a few cases, such as the Bito in Kitara (in Uganda) and the Kololo among the Lozi (in western Zambia) and certain Ngoni states (in Malawi and Tanzania), the migration ended in a sedentary state showing important degrees of social stratification. But this was brought about by the superposition of the immigrating people over an earlier settled population and was not a situation maintained throughout the migration itself.

Moeller postulated the continuation of social stratification during the period of migration as a crucial element in his hypothesis, establishing the stratified societies of Kivu Province directly on the model of the former kingdom of Kitara. He therefore portrayed a migration “en formations qui associent Hamites, Bantous, et Batwa. Cette migration, qui laisse en cours de route les formations que nous trouvons échelonnées le long des Grands Lacs (notamment au Rwanda et en Urundi), atteint au Sud-Ouest du lac Kivu la région de la Lwindi (ou Ulindi).”³⁴ By arguing that the migrations were composed of socially distinct groups, Moeller did not need to account for the later emergence and development of the political units he was considering, or even the emergence of social classes. Implicitly, therefore, he viewed class structure simply as a continuation of previous stratification throughout the migration period, not as a result of migration.³⁵ By assuming that a fixed class formation preceded the migration, and that social institutions were rigid and unchanging, Moeller used the presence of the stratified class structure found “le long des Grands Lacs” as evidence for migrations. Under such conditions the search for such migrations is accepted as virtually the sole task of the historian: simply placing people and tracing migrations become substitutes for historical analysis.

THE EARLY and prolific writings of Fr. Pierre Colle have served as primary sources for many writers on Bushi; all the works cited in this chapter refer to at least one of his publications.³⁶ Colle’s works represent an enormous and valuable compilation of numerous aspects of Shi life and culture. However, comparing his *Essai de monographie* with his own later work serves as a reminder to historians of their obligation always to consult the earliest available sources rather than

being content to construct layer after layer of secondary and tertiary works. The quality of Colle's original work has not often been replicated in the subsequent brief summaries based on it. In fact, these summaries have all too often misrepresented Colle's work, both by simplifying and condensing it, and by extending his observations on the northern Shi to other regions that have been less well documented, notably the Havu.

Despite the highly generalized cultural similarities that Colle noted between the Shi and neighboring areas, his work cannot be applied to other areas of Kivu without careful corroborating studies.³⁷ The same stricture holds true even within Bushi itself, for, although the central Shi may form a coherent ethnic group, the Shi today (that is, in 1975) number well over five hundred thousand people, and included within that broad ethnic category are seven distinct political units of varying sizes and ecologies. Under these circumstances, one would indeed expect significant cultural and political variation. But Colle did not consider these in any systematic way, and others after him have tended to apply his studies of localized areas among the northern Shi indiscriminately to all of Bushi.³⁸

One major problem in later works is the lack of any clear and agreed definition of the term "race" by writers on Bushi. Colle's work is interesting as an illustration of how inconsistent and ambivalent definitions have been interpreted and used by later writers in a manner generally determined by their preconceptions of Bushi (preconceptions based in part on Rwanda) more than by understanding the society. In his earlier work, Colle stated that "le Bushi est habité par deux populations bien différents; les Bashi qui forment le menu peuple, et les Baluzi, la classe dominante."³⁹ In his later work, however, this sentence was rendered as "Le Bushi est habité par deux races bien différents."⁴⁰ The substitution of "races" for "populations" is interesting and revealing in a sentence that was otherwise left unchanged.

The *Essai de monographie* was first published sixteen years after Colle's article. Between the appearance of these two publications, what Colle originally classified in social terms ("populations") became identified with, or rather transformed into, essentially a biological classification ("races"). This alteration in Colle's presentation is illustrative of the general trend in much European writing on Africa in the early years of this century—a trend toward increasing interest in racial identification and differentiation, and hence toward increasingly broad applications of racial terminology. At the time when it was written, the term "race," like "population," may indeed have contained a diffuse set of meanings covering

social, historical, and cultural elements as well as physical characteristics (connotations that it sometimes maintains in popular French today). In later years, as the term has become more narrowly defined, groups that were not originally distinguished on biological criteria writings in Colle's writings came to be defined in terms of physical characteristics. This interpretation remains widespread in the more recent sources today, especially as reflected in the "common 'race' = common origins" hypothesis. Therefore, it seems that in the interests of claimed scientific "rigor," historical hypothesis has, over time and through frequent repetition, become elevated to historical "fact." At the same time, lexical transformations have replaced cultural identities ("populations") with biological categories ("races"). Combined with the absence of additional empirical data, this has significantly altered the understanding of "historical facts"; in short, these transformations have been treated as definitive.

However, as presented, Colle's data do not in fact seem to support the idea of racial differences between the Luzi and the rest of the population. While Colle did mention that certain physical characteristics are more evident among individuals of the royal line in Bushi, he expressly excluded collective references to the larger clan as a whole (the Banyamocha, of which the ruling aristocracy was but a part): "On trouve . . . parmi . . . les gens de clan Banyamwocha."⁴¹ He noted that at the time of writing there had been no systematic identification and analysis of physical differences between the "Luzi" (the royal aristocracy) and other Shi. Nor, as noted above, have any other data since then established such physical distinctions. Nor are there apparent in Colle's works any references to cultural or social differences between the Luzi and the rest of the population, except those differences that might be attributed to distinctions in wealth and status determined by proximity to political power—and these differences are very minor in cultural terms. Such differentiation as exists in Bushi (in language, material culture, religion, etc.) appears to be more a question of regional variation than of "racial" or "migration-related" historical origins.

Another common confusion in the later works has been that of viewing Bushi as a conquest state. Cuypers refers to "invasion," and Willame refers explicitly to "la classe conquérante"; Moeller's position is ambiguous.⁴² As we have seen above, Moeller believed that class differences preceded the migrations and arrived with the migrating peoples. But he also assumed that military conquest was inevitably closely associated with social stratification and racial differences ("sang watuzi"): "À l'origine des familles régnautes se trouvent des conquérants venus du Nord-Est du Lac Kivu, et sans doute de sang watuzi."⁴³

This interpretation may in part result from the author's preoccupation with sources on Rwanda, where the early well-known accounts (Pagès, de Lacger) also portrayed the Tutsi as having conquered the previous inhabitants of the country. If the Luzi are identified as Tutsi, then the same historical processes are easily transposed from Rwanda to the later writers in Bushi. Colle, however, explicitly minimized the role of armed conquest in the formation of the Shi states: "Les deux autres [fils de Nyamuhoye] réussirent à supplanter les chefs du Bushi et du Rwanda par la ruse plus encore que par la force."⁴⁴ Here, as elsewhere in Africa, the establishment of a new social order and new dynasty is seen to be closely associated with the introduction of new food crops, possibly with important demographic results.⁴⁵

The nonmilitary aspect of this process of state formation in Bushi is reinforced by constant reference in both legend and ritual to the role of the people, and by the importance to the ruling family of winning and keeping their support. In fact, the political system in Bushi appears to be much more fragile and flexible than that portrayed by Cuypers and Willame.⁴⁶ References to absolute power, to the "classe conquérante," and to power based on force, all result from a distortion of Colle's writings. Once the Luzi become identified as a "race," dominating politics and wielding "absolute" (instead of "ultimate") authority, it becomes perfectly acceptable to think of them in terms of a "conquering" people. But this is no more than a logical elaboration based on the later writers' own preconceptions: conquest, resulting from the meeting of the two distinct races, explains the presence of social stratification. Logic has replaced data; hypothesis has replaced research; confusion has replaced understanding. This is the fashion in which history has become transformed in the writings in question.

Part of the confusion in the later sources may result from the lack of precision in Colle's use of words. We have already seen that Colle apparently equated "population" with "race," although in current usage the two words have important differences in connotation. Colle also showed a preference for the same terms as those applied to Rwanda, a preference that makes the social categories appear more similar for the two areas than they may in fact be. In one case he equated the word "clan" with "caste."⁴⁷ He also applied the term "caste" to Shi political appointees of various strata, the *barhambo*. But the *barhambo* are not a hereditarily defined group (though in certain circumstances a *murhambo* may be succeeded by his son); they are not endogamous; and aside from the social distinctions associated with accessibility to power, there exist no important cultural distinctions between them and the rest of the population. They are not, in short, a "caste."

Yet a further semantic confusion adds to this effect of “transferring” the better-known social context of Rwanda to the lesser-known historical and sociological context of Bushi: the apparent similarity of the terms “Luzi” and “Tutsi.” Although there has been no linguistic analysis of the relationship of these terms, they have often been accepted as simply minor variations of the same term, thus “proving” (in the eyes of some) the common origins of the two groups. Even aside from sociological differences in the two areas, and differences in their historical traditions, this does not seem a reliable transformation. In this area, it is true that the sounds represented by the letters “l” and “r” are difficult for outsiders to distinguish and apparently are virtually interchangeable; similarly with the sounds represented by the letters “rh” and “t.” But there is no similar alteration current for “r” and “rh,” despite the arbitrary choice of similar romanized letters to represent the sounds involved. And thus there is no interchangeability between the “l” sound and the “t” sound. Pending a proper linguistic analysis, those who assert the similarity of the two words as proof of the Luzi and Tutsi identity are arguing on doubtful evidence.⁴⁸

In fact, Colle left the impression that one of the most important characteristics distinguishing the Luzi from the common people is to be found neither in their “race” nor in their culture, but rather in their historical traditions. Colle’s historical presentation was brief. He was careful to point out both that these are *royal* traditions and that the genesis traditions consisted primarily of stories (“*légendes*”) rather than constituting an analytical and complete historical study.⁴⁹ However, others who have followed him have neglected these observations, preferring to represent Luzi traditions as the only traditions valid for Bushi, and therefore applicable directly to the entire population. That is, they have tended to use Colle’s selective “legends” as statements of historical fact without analysis.

References only to traditions of the Luzi have made it seem that the Luzi are the only dynamic and active elements in Shi society, and that the rest of the population is passive and static. In this way also the differences between the two groups are exaggerated. In fact, nonroyal family and local traditions refer equally to important movements, change, and the formation and alteration of local alliances, just as do the Luzi traditions; Colle himself referred to the movement and maneuvering of other groups.⁵⁰ Because later sources overlook the vigorous interactions between these social elements unaccounted for in Luzi traditions, the flexibility and dynamism of the political and social systems in this area are vastly underestimated in the more recent published condensations of Shi history.

Recent fieldwork has begun to correct some of these biases and misconceptions, and over the next several years our understanding of eastern Kivu societies, and Bushi in particular, may be transformed.⁵¹ But until these works, based on fieldwork at the microlevel, are made accessible to the public, those working from written sources need to tread with care. It is hoped that this discussion has helped to identify some of the pitfalls that await the unwary. It is also hoped that by inquiring into the causes that have led others before us to tumble, we may be able to avoid some of the same pitfalls ourselves. At least we can hope that the failures of the next generation, if not also their achievements, will be original to them alone.