

THE CHURCH AND THE COLONIAL STATE IN TWO FILMS: 'DOCUMENTARY ON THE BAPTISM OF THE KING OF RWANDA' AND 'THE CONSECRATION OF BISHOP BIGIRUMWAMT'

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Abstract

This paper studies the sacraments of the baptism of King Mutara III Rudahigwa and Queen mother Kankazi of Rwanda and the consecration of Bigirumwami as the first African Bishop of central Africa. It does so by looking at two films that depict those sacraments, i.e., 'Documentary on The Baptism of the King of Rwanda' and 'The Consecration of Bishop Bigirumwami.' It argues that the sacraments were religious, but also political, given the collaboration of the church with the colonial state. It also argues that the films provide us with exceptional visual materials that written documents cannot portray. Through the magic of the images, films offer more insights in terms of putting before our eyes the reality, even if this reality is the one of the documentary, that is, a selected one. But on the other hand, it leaves us with so many gaps in the description of the sacraments and the celebrations that followed. Only archives and published documents were able to fill this gap. The paper advocates for the complementarity of the film and other historical sources.

Introduction

Five years ago, a number of Belgian research institutions that include the Royal Museum of Central Africa, the Royal Cinemateque, the KADOC (Documentation and Research Centre of Religion, Society and Culture) and the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) in conjunction with universities located in Congo, Burundi and Rwanda have undertaken an ambitious project of digitization of colonial films. By last year, more than 150 films were already digitized. From October to December 2011, I did an internship at the ULB. I spent this time analyzing around twenty films on Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

The two films that I am studying in this paper are about the Roman Catholic Church and the Colonial state. Indeed, these two institutions are very close. The two have collaborated in the

construction of the colonial empire and in the reshaping of African beliefs, in what they called the 'civilizing mission.' Both were considered foreign contributions to the society and culture of Rwanda, and were gradually integrated into them.

Why the choice of these two films? First, because they are recordings of sacraments. These sacraments are also events, since those who received them were by then public figures in Rwandan politics and society. As a result, the celebration of these sacraments entered the Rwandan colonial historiography.

This essay has two parts. The first is a brief presentation of the content of the movies. The latter tries to contextualize the events captured by these films, that is to say, the sacraments received by the king Rudahigwa and the abbot Bigirumwami, the celebrations and the significance of these crucial moments in the memory and history of Rwanda. This article highlights the complementarity between film and written documents for their ability - and even their limits - to restore the memory of the past.

1. Films

FILM 1: Documentary on The Baptism of the King of Rwanda

This film was released 1943. It was directed by a company called INFORCONGO. It is 16 minutes long, mute and in black and white. It starts by showing the Cathedral Immaculatae of Kabgayi (Centre of Rwanda) (00'51''-2'00''). Then it highlights a large crowd of men, women, and children wearing modern clothes, mainly of white colour. We are at the beginning of the 1940s, so it transpires that modern clothes are being available for most ordinary Rwandans. These people, presumably Christians, are located outside the Cathedral. Then we see king Mutara III Rudahigwa walking and surrounded by some personalities who include a European man on the left, a woman a bit old, that is, her mother Nyiramavugo Kankazi, and a young lady, surely her wife Rosalia Gicanda on the right side. This is their arrival. Then we see two European men wearing white uniforms that make them look like soldiers or officials, with a third European behind them. The crowd of Christians is behind them. Then, a couple of whites arrive, and a big number of Europeans men and women come behind them. Then the film underlines the presence of five pretty European women and so many Rwandans placed behind them.

Then we see the interior of the cathedral where the mass is taking place (2'00''-2'33''). A bishop is leading the mass, it is Bishop Leon Classe, the paramount leader of the Roman Catholic Church of Rwanda. The film emphasizes the Bishop, the Rwandan young men who are servants, but also Europeans. Again the film shows the crowd of Rwandan Christians who are outside the cathedral (2'34''-2'47''), a sign that so many people attended this 'national' ceremony. These people are located in an empty place between the cathedral and a building that looks like a school. The surface of this area is big, which suggests that people attending this ceremony are numerous. We see again the clergy leading of the mass (2'47''-). Are they inside or outside? Then the interior of the cathedral is shown again. The king and the queen mother receive the blessing. They also receive the candle of the baptized (4'10''). People sitting in the interior are emphasized. They are in majority Europeans, such as men, women, and a baby carried by her mother or grand-mother. Then again the king and her mother are shown carrying their candles. Many people are sitting behind them. Then it is the end of the mass and the Christians go out of the cathedral (4'43''-4'48'').

The next scene takes place in a different venue (4'48''-). We see the king and another European man in the front sits, followed by a range of European people, both women and men. The place where the festivities are taking place is made of a long stand built in wood and straw, beautiful and big. It is a wickerwork architecture where decoration and colours are appealing. On the right side of the king there is a big number of Europeans, both women and men. On his left, there are also Europeans who include the Bishop. Again we see several missionaries. At one time, the king is shown alone (5'41''-5'51''). Then immediately, three or four women come out of a car parked near the stand. The camera leaves those women a moment, and shows the crowd of Rwandans wearing white clothes in general and sitting on the ground. Some of them have sticks, and we see a young person sitting on top of a tree perhaps in order to watch very closely the festivities (5'58''). Since the sitting place is oblique, it is possible that the area is a hill. The drummers and artists are emphasized (6'08''). The drum beating starts. We see 13 or 14 drummers in action. Then dancers in white appear and disappear in order to give place to the male Intore dancers (6'37''-). We see the famous dancer Butera on the front side. The camera insists on him and on two other dancers next to him, as a sign that the producers of the film liked them (6'47'' – 7'57''). Then other Intore dancers are shown. There is a lighting effect in the filming at this level of Intore dances

(8'25'' – 9'21''), where we see the pale alternating with the clear in a somewhat artistic mixing. Is this intentional or not? Intore dances continue up to 9'54''.

The guests are again emphasized (9'54''-). The Intore dancers appear once more (10'10'' -). The king is explaining something to a European man who seems to be a missionary (10'54''-11'06''). Is it about the Intore dance? The latter continues up to 11'20''. On the stage, the Intore dancers are replaced by drummers. We see again the arrival of some Rwandan women very well dressed entering in the stand near the other guests of honor (12'36''). Suddenly, the king stands and goes near the drummers. At the same time, the competition of motorcycle drivers starts. A white man is carrying around eight young Africans on a single motorcycle. This is symbolic, given the colonial context. The whites have to be portrayed as heroes. Other acrobatic plays follow.

A series of speeches now follows. Three Rwandan men make a speech in front of the guests of honor (13'26''). The film shows again the crowd of people on the hill in front of the guests of honor. The Intore dancers arrive once again (13'43''-15'05''). The acrobatics perform again (15'06''). This time there are cyclists. We see three people on a single bicycle. Then the famous pole vault so well known in Ruanda-Urundi (15'05''-16'00'') continues up to the end of the film.

From the above description, a number of questions need to be addressed:

- 1) What does it bring to the existing literature about the baptism of the Rwandan king?
- 2) What does the literature bring to it?
- 3) Why is it that the king is baptized in 1943 and not before or after, if we take into consideration the fact that Bishop Classe wanted that his father Musinga and grandmother Kanjogera be also baptized, and that those two refused and that their refusal caused many conflicts between them and the Roman Catholic clergy and the Belgian colonial administration? Why is it that the pressure to be baptized was put on them and not on Rudahigwa? Is it because they trusted him as is shown in the Belgian annual reports?
- 4) Why the choice of 1943 during the Second World War? We see the presence of so many European people, is this due to the war taking place in Europe?

FILM 2: The Consecration of Bishop Bigirumwami

This was released in 1952. It was directed by Father Roger de Vloo. It is 9 minutes long. It is in colour and has the sound. Bishop Bigirumwami is indeed the first black prelate in Belgian Africa, a sign that his consecration was an exceptional event in Belgian colonies. The ‘grandiose ceremonies’ of his consecration took place in Kabgayi, on 1st June 1952. As the narrator of the film makes it clear, all the political authorities of the country were present. However, the Governor General was absent, but he was represented. Bigirumwami was consecrated by Bishop Déprimoz. In the cathedral of Kabgayi there were 4,000 invited guests, according to the film.

The film starts with the sound of the church bell while the casting is moving on the screen (00’56’’- 1’22’’). Then the arrival of Belgian authorities welcomed by Rwandans and soldiers in majority black, and the kings of Rwanda and Burundi behind them (1’23’’- 1’50’’). Members of the clergy make a procession and their bellboys. All of them enter in the church.

At the beginning of the film, the content of the film is dominated by the description of the ritual of consecration (1’50’’- 4’30’’): Bishops’ clothing, contemplation, the anointing of the head and hands, prayers, songs, gestures and movements, all prepared in advance. When the narrator keeps quiet, we hear a background music of the organ of the church or songs in Latin sung by men. The servants bring objects called “symbolic offerings”, give them to Bigirumwami, who in turn gives them to Bishops who are consecrating him, these give them to servants who take them away. In this process, Bigirumwami kisses the ring of Bishop Déprimoz. Then the Eucharistic celebration ensues followed by the sacrifice of the elected one together with the Bishop executing the consecration (4’31’’- 5’55’’). The bread and the wine are given to Bigirumwami, and also the miter and crozier. Then he is consecrated. Bigirumwami, now Bishop, blesses the assembly. Then the king of Ruanda, Mutara III Rudahigwa, is shown making a speech (5’55’’-). But his words are not recorded in the film. The narrator says that this speech is about the king congratulating the new bishop. The narrator indicates again that the king gave to Bishop Bigirumwami a car that is “magnificent.” Bishop Bigirumwami also speaks. He thanks the colonial and church authorities and says with his voice in the film (6’20’’-6’37’’): “If so much progress has been achieved in our country in

a very short time, it is thanks to the presence of the colonial power that is wise, generous, and Christian. With it, we plan to pursue a frank and loyal collaboration.”

These words are highly significant for they show very well the position of a prelate of a colonized country and the need for him to prove that he understands well from which power he got his appointment. We are in 1952, the Belgian colonial rule has lasted some thirty years, but he says “in a very short time.” Just towards the end of this speech that appears to be an excerpt of his entire speech, the flag of the kingdom of Belgium on the soil of Kabgayi is emphasized in the film (6'37''-6'41''), as a way of illustrating what Bishop Bigirumwami was just saying.

Then we witness the drums and the drummers in the image, sound and comments of the narrator. According to the latter, there are around 40,000 'enthusiastic' spectators who take part to this ceremony. The bulk of them are dressed in white, but one Rwandan man is shown wearing a blue suit, with a red tie, a white shirt and a hat. He is a bit mature. We then see the Intore dancers. They are wearing a dancing uniform of red, black and white colours, perhaps as a way of symbolizing the Belgian flag. Among the spectators we see in the front side many Europeans who include missionaries. We see also a man in blue uniform, probably a policeman, near a missionary smoking pipe. Then the camera moves towards the guests of honour's place where we see bishops and other very important persons. A man appears, makes a speech, but his words are not recorded (8'15'' - 8'18''), then women wearing white dresses start to dance. This dance is short, followed by a parade of cows, with the king and great chiefs in front of them. These cows are called Inyambo, they have very long horns. The camera stops at one of those cows, near which a man is declaiming praise poems for cows called « *amazina y'inka* », then the parade of cows continues. In this parade, there are two men who carry calves that are too young to walk. “As a sign of homage, says the narrator, the king offers a cow and a calf to the representative of the Governor General and to Bishop Sigis Mundi.” He also pays homage to Bishop Bigirumwami, as is said by the narrator (9'17''-9'33''). This comment ends the film.

Except Bishop Bigirumwami who has been depicted speaking, no one else spoke. For example, the king of Rwanda was shown, but his speech was not kept in the film.

This is a propaganda film in favour of the Roman Catholic Church and the Colonial power, if we look at the sequences of the ceremony as selected in this short film. Surely the

consecration lasted more than nine minutes, which suggests that these images are a selected portion of the whole ceremony.

2. The Events

The above two documentaries immortalize two events, at the same time religious and political: the baptism of Rudahigwa and the consecration of Bigirumwami. First, they are religious: they describe the unfolding of sacraments that are executed by the catholic clergy in front of Christians. They embody strategies and calculations of embellishing the image of the missionary action of conversion. They respond to the need and the mission of the White Fathers to convert first the leaders of Africa in order to attract masses afterwards. They ‘indigenize’ the Christian action in a way. But they are also political: they describe two leaders, the one political, the other religious.

But there are more than documentaries. We have also written documents. For example, the archives reveal to what extent these events are complex. On the one hand, there is a debate on their nature, whether they are solely religious or solely political. For example, on 5 October 1943, the Governor General Pierre Rychmans had planned and promised to take part in the ceremonies of baptism of king Rudahigwa. But he had made sure to emphasize that this ceremony would remain strictly religious and unofficial, and that the administrative authorities who would attend it would do that “privately.” This is said despite the fact that he was going to be the godfather of the king and that he was among the key political authorities of the colonial rule.¹

Indeed, in such circumstance, it is difficult to separate the official from the private, especially when the presence of authorities is proven. Furthermore, there is the said and the unsaid. Perhaps, it is more important to evaluate the impact of this baptism on the political life of Rwanda and check whether it was a major event both political and religious or not. Indeed, this baptism proved that the king was Christian in a genuine way. This also bore a major impact on the development of the church in Rwanda, even if at this time, it was solidly implanted, especially after the great conversion of Rwandans to Catholicism in the 1930s. As for the consecration of Bigirumwami, even if it is strictly religious, it plays also a seminal role

¹ Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (5)7, J. Paradis, Résident du Ruanda, *Lettre à Monsieur l'Administrateur Territorial, Objet : Baptême du Mwami*, N° 1854/A.I.2., Kigali, le 5 octobre 1943.

in the political play within the church. Indeed, this consecration elevated the indigenous clergy in hierarchy vis-à-vis the European clergy.

On the other hand, through baptism, the king consolidated his relationship with the missionaries and with the Belgian authorities. We can see this through the devotion of the king to the church action from then up to his death in 1959. It is at the same time a political calculation, but perhaps also the proof of his religious faith. Moreover, the baptism of the king together with the queen mother was emblematic. It was recreating or at least mimicking the model of the precolonial rituals of enthronement of the king of Rwanda, where the latter had to be enthroned with her mother.

The Baptism of Rudahigwa

A certain number of important events have occurred well before the baptism of the king of Rwanda, Mutara III Rudahigwa. To begin with, in January 1942, the king Rudahigwa got married to a Christian wife, Rosalia Gicanda. As planned, the wedding was blessed by Bishop Classe at Kabgayi and the festivities took place at Shyogwe, the residence of the queen mother.²

This was in fact a second marriage because his first wife was Nyiramakomari since 1933³ up to April 1940. The latter was repudiated because of her 'incapacity' to give birth to the heir. Indeed, the first letter of king Rudahigwa to the Resident of Rwanda mentioning the chasing away of his wife is dated 20 April 1940. It reads in substance: "Dear Resident, it is with sorrow that I inform you that my wife just left. I repudiated her back to her home at Migongo. [...] Excuse me, Mr. Resident, for not giving you more details, since I feel painful."⁴ The details concerning that separation with the wife and the major reasons are provided by the Territorial Administrator. The repudiation was motivated by the need for the king to have a heir in future. But the latter did not want to resort to polygamy, since this was contrary to Christian values. On the other hand, Bishop Classe and the Governor of Ruanda-Urundi had

² Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (4) 3, J. Paradis, Résident du Ruanda, *Lettre à Monsieur le Gouverneur du Ruanda-Urundi, Objet : Mariage Mutara*, N° 30/P.I., Kigali le 5 janvier 1942; Fortunatus Rudakemwa, *L'évangélisation du Rwanda (1900-1959)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, p. 224.

³ Although the Linden mention the date of September 1933, this archival document suggests the year 1932 as when the wedding of king Rudahigwa with Nyiramakomari took place: Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (4) 1, Curriculum vitae de Charles, Léon, Pierre, Mutara III Rudahigwa, Mwami du Ruanda.

⁴ Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (4) 3, Mutara RUDAHIGWA, *Lettre à Monsieur le Résident du Ruanda*, Nyanza, le 20 avril 1940.

been also consulted and had approved the decision of the repudiation.⁵ At the beginning of September 1940, the choice of Rudahigwa had been clear: “Mr. Resident, I have the honour to inform you that the Mwami (king) will marry very soon [...] a lady named ROSARIA MUKAMUTARA [...] who is 16...”⁶

It is indeed this lack of a male heir that had led Bishop Classe to delay the baptism of the king.⁷ Yet, Bishop Classe had indicated in another occasion: “To always want to delay the baptism of the Batutsi [leaders] is to discourage them and leave them to the temptation of heresy.”⁸ In fact, the remarriage of the king was a condition to the organization of the baptism of the king. But also Bishop Classe wanted to catch up with time as he was getting very old and sick. He was afraid to miss this major event of baptizing the king, a deed that was going to elevate his missionary career.⁹

Now concerning the unfolding of the festivities, a certain number of preliminary remarks is necessary. There was a remarkable presence of Rwandan chiefs and subchiefs, as written documents report it. One archival letter indicates the invitation of Rwandan authorities: “Dear Territorial Administrator, I have the honour to inform you that the Mwami and his mother will be baptized at Kabgayi on 17 October. I request you to kindly inform this to all Rwandan leaders, and to insist that provincial chiefs be present at the ceremony. The subchiefs living around 40 km near Kabgayi are also invited to attend this ceremony.”¹⁰

Another document mentions around 50 Rwandan authorities who were present.¹¹ But surprisingly, the film does not emphasize this presence of Rwandan authorities.¹² But the presence of Europeans and Belgian authorities is well documented in the film. The presence of the lay people as well shown in the film makes this day a memorable event. Another

⁵ Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (4) 3, RUBBENS, l'Administrateur Territorial, *Lettre confidentielle à Monsieur le Résident du Ruanda, Kigali, Objet : Répudiation de Nyiramakomare*, Rusatira (Busanza-Nord), le 21 avril 1940.

⁶ Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (4) 3, M. DESSAINT, Délégué du Résident près le Mwami, *Lettre confidentielle à Monsieur le Résident du Ruanda, à Kigali, Objet : Mariage du Mwami*, n° 713/Cabinet, Nyanza, le 1^{er} septembre 1941.

⁷ Ian et Jane Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda (1900-1990)*, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 263.

⁸ In Van Overschelde, Classe, pp. 42 et 80 cité dans Ian et Jane Linden, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

⁹ Fortunatus Rudakemwa, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

¹⁰ Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (5)7, J. Paradis, Résident du Ruanda, *Lettre à Monsieur l'Administrateur Territorial, Objet : Baptême du Mwami*, N° 1610/A.I.2., Kigali, le 6 septembre 1943. Le soulignement est original.

¹¹ Ian et Jane Linden, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

¹² Francis Ramirez et Christian Rolot, *Histoire du cinéma colonial au Zaïre, au Rwanda et au Burundi*, Belgique, MRAC, p. 252.

important thing is that the king and queen mother receive not only the sacrament of baptism as the film points out, but also the sacraments of first communion and confirmation as seen in the archives.

Thus, the ceremony of sacraments of the king and queen mother took place at the cathedral of Kabgayi. It was a memorable day, given the presence of Europeans, Belgian authorities, Rwandan authorities but also Rwandan Christians. Obviously, the Governor General Pierre Rychmans and his wife were present, as the first was the godfather of the king. One statement mentions the presence of ten thousand Rwandans.¹³

The mass started at 9:00am and ended at 11:00am. It was led by Bishop Classe. In the interior of the cathedral, there were around one thousand people. One telegram speaks of « indigenous people amazed by the presence of the Governor General [Pierre Rychmans]”, but this is unlikely, given that the latter lived in Leopoldville [Kinshasa, Congo], some thousands kilometers from Rwanda. Rwandans were not used to see him. After the baptism, confirmation followed. Then Bishop Déprimoz, who was Bishop Coadjutor, celebrated the low mass. At the time of communion, the king and the queen mother received their first communion. Rosalia Gicanda, wife of the king, also got communion near his husband and mother-in-law.

The festivities now took place at the stadium where the spectacle of drums and Intore dancers was offered to guests of honour and to the crowd of Christians. Eight drums were offered to the king by black missionaries of Janja. Forty Intore dancers were led by the famous dancer Butera. The general observation was that this performance remained exceptional in rhythm. Around 1:00pm, lunch was served, but the telegram describing these events did not mention whether the crowd of ordinary Christians also shared the lunch with guests. At 3:00pm, the show resumed at the stadium. There were competitions of music and improvisation. There were also acrobats and cyclists. Thirdly, the group of students of Kabgayi entertained the assembly so ‘excellently.’ Finally, the competition of the pole vault was executed. The

¹³ The unfolding of the mass and the festivities are described in detail in following documents: Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (5)7, J. Paradis, Résident du Ruanda, *Télégramme destiné au Service Information Léopoldville et Belgique*, Archives Africaines, RWA (5)7, J. Paradis, Résident du Ruanda, *Télégramme pour Service Information sous couvert PROGOV Usumbura*.

maximum height was 2.25m. At the end of the festivities, the king granted public forgiveness to one of the great chiefs who had been dismissed for ‘offence against the Mwami.’

Another series of festivities continued at the Junior Seminary of Kabgayi from 6:00pm. The shows were made of three poetic genres of Rwanda, namely the dynastic poetry, the war poetry and pastoral poetry where both tradition and modernity were mixed.

The next day, 18 October, festivities continued again. They were dominated by dances performed by the royal troop and by the parade of two herds of sacred cattle called Inyambo, made of “the most beautiful cows of Rwanda.”

The Consecration of Bigirumwami

The background of Bigirumwami was exceptional, if compared to other Rwandan Christians or other Rwandans in the catholic clergy. He got baptized only three days after his birth, at Christmas 1904, very few years after the introduction of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. This is a proof that his parents were among the very first converted Rwandans. In fact his father, Joseph Rukamba, was among the first Christians of the Mission of Zaza. Bigirumwami studied at the Junior Seminary of Kabgayi, then ordained priest when he was 25. This experience made him one of the rare young Rwandans to have completed studies at young age. Moreover, he spent his whole life in school and catholic missions. This put him far away from his family and ‘traditional’ environment, a situation that influenced his whole life. In order to compensate this loss, he had done so much research on culture and customs of Rwanda.¹⁴ He is among clergy members who wrote a lot of documents.

After becoming priest, he spent 18 years at the Mission of Muramba as main priest. He spent another year as main priest at the Mission of Nyundo. Finally, he was appointed head of the

¹⁴ His publications include the following: Aloys Bigirumwami, *Imihango y'imigenzo ni y'imizilirizo. Igitabo cya mbere : Imigenzo n'imizilirizo [Pratiques et interdits traditionnels. Volume I : Pratiques et interdits]*, Nyundo, s. éd., 1964 ; *Imihango y'imigenzo ni y'imizilirizo. Igitabo cya kabili : Kuragura, guterekerera, kubandwa, Nyabingi [Pratiques et interdits traditionnels. Volume II : Divination, culte des ancêtres, culte de Ryangombe, Nyabingi]*, Nyundo, s. éd., 1968 ; *Ibitekerezo, indilimbo, imbyino, ibihozo, inanga, ibyivugo, ibigwi, imyato, amahamba n'amazina y'inka, ibiganiro [Récits historiques, chansons, chansons dansées, berceuses, chansons pour harpe, poèmes guerriers, chants pastoraux, poèmes pastoraux, jeux de mots, humour]*, Nyundo, s.éd., 1971a ; *Imigani miremire [Contes, fables]*, Nyundo, s. éd., 1971b et *Imana y'abantu. Abantu b'Imana. Imana mu bantu. Abantu mu Mana [Le Dieu des hommes. Les hommes de Dieu. Dieu parmi les hommes. Les hommes qui croient en Dieu]*, Nyundo, s. éd., 1979.

Vicariate of the Diocese of Nyundo in February 1952.¹⁵ This was a great joy not only for Bigirumwami, but also for Rwanda.¹⁶ In opposition to this unanimous description, two authors think that Bigirumwami, from North-west, had been elevated by Bishop Déprimoz in order counterbalance the power of the catholic clergy from the centre.¹⁷

The document that describes the unfolding of the mass when the sacrament of the episcopate was delivered to Bigirumwami narrates that around 25.000 people in majority Rwandans had come to Kabgayi. 250 vehicles were parked there, a phenomenon that had impressed Rwandans, given that cars were very few in Rwanda by then. There were around 4,000 invited guests. This document indicates so many names of people who are not mentioned in the film, who came from Bujumbura, Tanganyika, Belgian Congo and Uganda. All the chiefs of Rwanda, around 350, were there. The clergy members were also a lot.¹⁸

The mass lasted three hours, between 9.30' and 12.30'. The festivities took three days from 1 to 3 June 1952. They included dances, sport competitions, the parade of the Inyambo cows and poetic as well as drama performances. These were organized by various groups: civilians, military, religious, men, women, youth, etc. All these came from different regions of the country. This feature gave to festivities a national character. The manner in which the king and the queen mother celebrated this event also made it a national event. For example, the king offered a car and an amount of money to the Bishop of Rwanda in order to enable him carry out his duties. The queen mother organized a pompous reception to Bishop Bigirumwami at Shyogwe on 3 June. In particular, the speech of the king underscores the great importance that Rwandans assigned to the consecration of their fellow Rwandan. The tone in that speech is political, but also moralizing, for it refers to Christian values that the new bishop was called upon to inculcate to Rwandans or that the latter expected from him. Finally, the speech of Bishop Bigirumwami is about thanking the king for his support for God's mission. It is also about expressing gratitude to all people who came to attend the sacrament and the festivities. There is also a special mention of the king of Burundi and his delegation, and the bishops of neighbouring countries, and White Fathers, and members of the clergy of Rwanda and their parents. He professed and proclaimed his faith in the Church that

¹⁵ <http://editions-sources-du-nil.over-blog.com/article-31913892.html>, consulté le 15/11/2011.

¹⁶ Padri Ruberizesa Innocent, *Musenyeri Aloyizi Bigirumwami, Urwibutso rw'imyaka amaze : 80 avutse (1904-1984)*, 55 ahawe Ubusaserdoti 1929-1984, 32 abaye Umwepiskopi 1952-1984, Diyosezi ya Nyundo, INR, 1986, p. 8.

¹⁷ Ian et Jane Linden, *Christianisme et pouvoirs au Rwanda (1900-1990)*, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 301.

¹⁸ Padri Ruberizesa Innocent, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

is “One, Saint, and Catholic.”¹⁹ He also thanked Belgium as trusteeship power, and it is this vote of thanks that is recorded in the film.

Conclusion

There was a project of doing some editing and adding the sound to the film on the baptism of the king and the queen mother in London, but producers and directors failed to provide the budget that was needed, since it was very expensive.²⁰ That is why this film remained mute. Yet, as Burdon argues, the sound is by far the more important part of the content of the film or television, than the image.²¹ Without the archival documents that described in detail the unfolding of the ceremonies and festivities of 17 and 18 October 1943, we understand to what extent the explanations provided by the mute film were going to be insufficient. But the film on the consecration of Bigirumwami, being in colour and with sound, offered enough insights. However, it is also limited because it is very short.

The fact that these films were very short in time make us think that the masses and the festivities had lasted only some few minutes, but the archives and the other written documents inform us that two whole days were spent on the celebrations of the baptism of the king and her mother, and that the consecration of Bigirumwami had taken three days. The films appear here as a very outstanding audiovisual material to give us a picture of what happened, but at the same time, they show their limit to reconstruct the details of the events. The films provide us with exceptional visual materials that written documents cannot portray. Through the magic of the images, films offer more insights in terms of putting before our eyes the reality, even if this reality is the one of the documentary, that is, a selected one. To go even further, documentaries are also capable of conveying ideological messages.²²

The combination of the films with written documents helps us then to reconstitute a fuller picture of what happened. While the films show us images of the sacraments, almost as if it was reality before our eyes, the documents complement the film in a very interesting manner.

¹⁹ Padri Ruberizesa Innocent, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-20.

²⁰ Voir Belgique, Archives Africaines, RWA (5)7, J. Van den Haute, Chef du Service de l'Information et de la Propagande, *Lettre à Monsieur le Gouverneur du Ruanda-Urundi à Usumbura*, N° 18/INF.-, Léopoldville, le 8 janvier 1945.

²¹ Jérôme Bourdon, « L'historien devant l'audiovisuel. Préambules méthodologiques », in « *Image et Histoire* », *Actes du Colloque Paris-Censier, mai 1986*, Paris, Editions-Diamants, 1987, pp. 64-96, pp. 77-79.

²² See Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film/Film on History*, London, Pearson and Longman, 2006, p. 72.

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The analysis of these films shows that this exercise has to continue. They will provide an irreplaceable didactic material to students of history, but we must not expect to get all the details of the past through them. We still need a parallel reading of written documents.

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