

The lonely imperialist. Richard Kandt and the making of colonial politics at the very periphery of the Empire.

This paper examines the making of Richard Kandt as an agent of colonial rule. He started as an explorer, who was interested in the geography and ethnography of the interlacustrine region of Eastern African and eventually became the first colonial official in the kingdom of Ruanda. The making of Kandt as an “imperialist”, I argue, had many authors, among them: Kandt himself, the colonial bureaucracies in Dar es Salaam and Berlin, and not at the least the Ruandan court. This approach is based on an understanding of the importance of colonial agents for the presence of the colonial state. In the very first moments of colonial rule it was to men like Kandt to embody the colonial state. But how exactly were the relationships between the colonial state and its agents?

For the German colonial empire the relationship between the colonial state and its agents is widely under-researched. Only few studies about the colonial bureaucracy and military in German colonies are published up to now. Africa had always been a minor topic among German historians and even the German colonial empire of the 19th and 20th centuries hardly became prominent among them. In the 1970ies, Germany’s colonial past came into the focus of some German social historians, who were predominately interested in institutions and structures rather than in agencies. They portrayed the establishment of colonial rule as an enforcement of institutions brought from the motherland. The often cruel military campaigns during the initial years were taken as a proof of strong colonial state.¹ This picture was contested by historians like John Iliffe, Marcia Wright and Ralph Austin, who highlighted the role African agency played in the establishment of colonial rule.² Though these historians developed a much more balanced

1 Bald, Detlef (1970): *Deutsch-Ostafrika 1900-1914. Eine Studie über Verwaltung, Interessengruppen und wirtschaftliche Erschliessung*, Afrika-Studien, Nr. 54, Weltforum-Verl., München, ISBN: 3-8039-0038-7, Tetzlaff, Rainer (1970): *Koloniale Entwicklung und Ausbeutung. Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutsch-Ostafrikas, 1885-1914*, Berlin.

2 Austen, Ralph A. (1968): *Northwestern Tanzania under German and British Rule. Colonial Policy and Tribal Politics, 1889-1939*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Iliffe, John (1969): *Tanganyika under German Rule 1905-12*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Iliffe, John (1979): *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Wright, M. (1969): *Local Roots of Policy in German East Africa*, *Journal of African History* 9 [10], pp. 621-630.

view on German colonial politics, they tend to see the colonial state as a rather holistic institution. I would argue that the early colonial state was hardly a *deus ex machina* that produced its structures within a given territory and its agents as mirrors of its dispositions. Although the colonial state was in its projection and its final shape a territorial state, it took a long way to create that territorial formation. Not so much in the delimitation of the territory, this was mostly done elsewhere, on the tables of European diplomacy, but in bringing the presence of the colonial state into that territory. Nevertheless, the colonial state, itself situated at the periphery of the empire, had its own peripheries. The colonial state was a patchwork of different spatial configurations and temporal balances of the struggle over the contact zone in which the colonial state emerged. This is not to say that we cannot put these situations into a meaningful picture. Yet the picture would look much more like a Picasso than a Delacroix. The historian Clifton Crais framed it this way: If we take a closer look at concrete situations in which the colonial state emerged as political framework we encounter "astoundingly complex interplay of African and European modes and models of power and political practice".³ What is seldom taken into account when historians look at the formulation of colonial politics on the spot is question of resources available to different agents of colonial rule. The agency of colonial agents was dependent on the access to the resources the colonial state could provide to them. The periphery of the periphery was characterized by a limited access to the colonial state's resources by colonial agents. For most of the territory of the colony the infrastructure was highly underdeveloped. This made this communication between the administration in Dar es Salaam and its representatives in the interior to an arduous and chancy undertaking. Letters with reports took weeks or months to reach the authorities at the coast, order from the Governor reached the administrative outposts in many cases not in time to influence the events they addressed. Troops to react to deteriorations of security were not always easily available for local colonial officials. The construction of administrative outposts in the interior took months if not years because construction material had to be carried on the back of porters over distances of several hundred kilometres on paths rather than roads. In that sense, colonial officials were oft left alone notably on the periphery of the

3 Clifton C. Crais, *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power, and the Political Imagination in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 7.

colony.

If the colonial state had difficulties to provide colonial officials with necessary resources, it also struggled to author the politics of its agents at the periphery. This was not only a question of insufficient chains of command or lacking means of communication. Few of its agents had been socialized within the colonial bureaucracy, they came indeed from very different backgrounds. Few of them had been educated in colonial educational establishments which had been founded at end of the 19th century. The first generation of German colonial agents had usually been officers from Prussic regiments, only few came from bureaucracy of the Foreign Office that then was in charge for the colonies. Kandt himself was a trained psychologist with no training in colonial matters. He even had not envisioned a career as a colonial official when he travelled to Africa. As I have shown elsewhere, for the colonial state it was sometimes a rather difficult task to bring these men under its tutelage.⁴ As a consequence, the colonial state and its officials did not necessarily shared a common policy. German colonial history is full of conflict between the different layers of colonial administration and agents. As I will show in the next pages, Kandt continuously tried to distance himself from the colonial state and his colleagues. Psychologically and habitually it often seems that he avoided to be part of the colonial apparatus.

Whereas the colonial state as an institution struggled to bring its politics into the establishment of colonial rule notably in the peripheries of the colony, its officials there struggled with local agents and institutions of power to which they had to respond. Of course, in many situations they answered the question for power with violence, but after the violence they had to come to terms with local agents. Nevertheless, violence was not always an option. As the example of Richard Kandt shows, the resources for enacting colonial politics as a threat with violence or its actual enactment were not always viable. Moreover, even the violence was shaped by local agents and patterns and the outcome of violence was sometimes hard to control. Germans usually hired for their punitive expeditions African warriors, which they received from allied chiefs. The latter, however, sometimes successfully manipulated the lonely imperialists for their own agenda. Bluffs, rumours and intrigues, used both by Europeans and Africans, were the

⁴ See Michael Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika. Expeditionen, Militär und Verwaltung seit 1880*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2005).

currency to be changed into political influence. For Africans the control over the knowledge that became available to colonial officials was one of the most important ways to influence colonial politics. This may have been also case for colonial agents, who tried to defend their politics by trying to establish a monopoly of report to their superiors. This was one of the reasons why German colonial officials in the interlacustrine region often came into conflict with missionaries. Knowledge was a rare and perhaps the most valuable resource in this game between the different agents of colonial politics.

The Departure

Richard Kantorowicz was in many ways an outsider in both German society and the colony. He was born to a wealthy Jewish businessman and a protestant mother. Because of his Jewish background he had faced the growing anti-Semitism in late 19th century German Empire while being a student in Munich,. According to Reinhardt Bindseil, who wrote a short biography about him, he encountered some problems in his time with the students' association the Munich Rhenania.⁵ As a reaction to these experiences, he changed his name into Kandt and accepted the protestant baptism in 1893. It is not clear if anti-Semitism contributed to his decision to make his way into Africa, but if this was the case, then Kandt jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. In the minds of many young German males, the colonies might have been connected to connotations of unbound freedom, but they were hardly liberal heavens. On the contrary, colonial politics was traditionally a playground for conservatives and nationalists.

As it may be, after completing his studies in medicine, the 26-year-old Kandt moved to Berlin with the decision to become an explorer. By then, he had earned a considerable inheritance from his father, which enabled him to realize his dreams. Although Kandt gained some support from Adolf Herzog zu Mecklenburg, a prominent figure in the colonial movement, and even from the Foreign Office, Kandt had to pay most of the expenditures out of his own pocket. The government in Dar es Salaam was advised by the Foreign Office to support Kandt's

5 Bindseil, Reinhart. "Ruanda im Lebensbild des Afrikaforschers, Literaten und Kaiserlichen Residenten Richardt Kandt (1867-1918)." unpubl. Manuscript, 1994, p.21.

schemes with all possible means. This advice caused rather suspicion among leading officials in the colony than that it helped to open the doors for the unknown explorer. The acting vice-governor, Lothar von Trotha, regarded Kandt as a spy from the Foreign Office. He mocked his plan for a journey to Ruanda without any substantial military support as doomed to fail.⁶ The officer, who was at the same time the commanding officer of the colonial troops, had visited the northwestern region a year before, but had not entered the Rwandan kingdom. The expedition had been a major military endeavor that had caused much tension with African chiefs and led occasionally to regional warfare.⁷ In 1897 the colony was on the verge of collapse. In many places Africans offered fierce resistance to German rule and the colonial troops failed to suppress the resistance within a short time – a fact the officers on the spot tried to hide from their superiors in Dar es Salaam, and the officials, who became aware of this, from their superiors in Berlin.

The explorer

In May 1897, when Kandt arrived at Dar es Salaam, he had to convince the authorities from his respectability as well as of his ability to reach his ambitious goals. One of the usual tests for each newly arrived traveler was the recruitment of porters, guides and armed guards. It took Kandt more than two months to take this first hurdle and to arrange his expedition of only 140 porters, three guides, seven servants and 15 guards. By ignoring the advice from Berlin, the government had denied him the right to equip his guards with modern guns, which put Kandt in a situation of defenselessness against possible attacks. Kandt himself commented this with some irony, and stated that the military might only hinder scientific exploration.⁸ In July 1897, started his expedition from Bagamoyo, which took him over to Tabora the next months and later to the

6 Richard Kandt, *Caput Nili. Eine Empfindsame Reise Zu Den Quellen Des Nils* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905), p. 78

7 Lothar von Trotha, *Meine Bereisung von Deutsch-Ostafrika. Vortrag gehalten in der Sitzung der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde am 12. Juni 1897* (Berlin, 1897), passim; *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* (henceforth DKB)1895, Über die Raubzüge des Häuptlings Machemba, p. 540; DKB 1896, Bericht über Expedition gegen Hassan bin Omari, p. 100; Expedition des Oberstleutnants von Trotha, p. 640.

8 Kandt, *Caput Nili*, pp. 18, 27

Malagarassi River some miles east of Lake Tanganyika. Plagued by a smallpox epidemic, which broke out among his porters, and by increasing financial difficulties, Kandt begged for further money with the Herzog and, some months later, the Foreign Office. He eventually received the money, but only a year later, in December 1898. Meanwhile Kandt was on his way to Ruanda, whose borders he reached in June 1898.⁹

German presence was not to be felt very strong for Rwandans at that time. It were more rumours than the actual experience of the arrival of a colonial power in the region. In 1892, the explorer Oskar Baumann had reached the border regions of the kingdom only to delay his further advance after he experienced an unconcealed antipathy by the local population and a growing resistance by his porters to travel further into the unknown territory. Two years later, it was Count of Götzen, who was the first European to visit the Rwandan court. He remained the only European to meet the legendary king Rwabugiri, who had turned a small chiefdom into a considerable kingdom by more than fifty years of conquest and diplomacy. Compared to Kandt, Götzen had a considerable force of more than 30 armed guards and 215 porters at his disposal.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Götzen faced the court's stubborn refusal to let him enter the inner circle of power, especially to meet the actual king. The court was unsure about the intentions of the German, who, from a viewpoint of a Ruandan aristocrat, did not behave according to diplomatic etiquette. After some days of delay, Götzen forced his entry to the king by arranging a nightly spectacle of fireworks and, in the following morning, by storming the doors of the palace. What followed was a hasty exchange of gifts, and Götzen, provided with necessary foodstuffs and guides to continue his way, eventually departed in a westerly direction.¹¹

It took another two years until the presence of the colonial state in the interlacustrine region began to take shape, although it was merely a shadow. The Ruandan court was relatively well informed about the arrival of Germans in the region. They maintained a regular exchange of information with the neighbouring chiefs, notably the kingdoms of Karagwe and Kyamtware. Moreover, the lines of communication between the court and its vassals living in the border

9 Kandt, *Caput Nili*, p. 196.

10 Gustav Adolf Graf von Götzen, *Durch Afrika von Ost Nach West. Resultate und Begebenheiten einer Reise von der Deutsch-Ostafrikanischen Küste bis zur Kongomündung in den Jahren 1893/94* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1899).p.

11 Götzen, *Durch Afrika*, p. 177-186.

regions were astonishingly well developed. And these were the news: In 1896, the colonial government in Dar es Salaam established the district of Bukoba, which bordered on the Ruandan kingdom. One year later, the officer Hans Ramsay was sent to Lake Tanganyika, where he built a military outpost at Ujiji. In 1897, Ramsay started a punitive expedition against the Burundians that during its course led him to the court of the Rwandan king. He was followed a year later by his successor Heinrich Bethe, who visited the Rwandan court at the beginning of 1898.¹²

When Bethe, Ramsay and later Kandt reached the Rwandan kingdom, Rwabugiri was dead and the battle of succession for the throne was decided for the moment in favor of Musinga and the driving forces behind the young king, notably the king's mother and the powerful chief Kabare. The young king had inherited a remarkably centralized kingdom with an estimated population of more than one million people. But, as in many other political entities of Eastern Africa at that time, the problem of succession plunged the kingdom into a deep political crisis. And as in many other cases, this opened the door for Europeans to manipulate local political structures in their favor. Although Rwandans developed a highly complex structure to reconcile the claims for power and influence between the different strata of the elites, the empty throne had quickly inflamed the courtly world of intrigue and Machiavellianism. Musinga's rise to the throne had been paved by a coup d'état organized by members of the Abega family against the King Rutalindwa, who belonged to the Bakono-lineage and had been named as the legitimate successor of the throne after the death of Rwabugiri. Although the coup of Rucuncu, as this event became known in Rwandan history, was, for the time being, successful in the elimination of the rivals for the throne, the new king struggled with a small power base and even smaller legitimation. There were still many opponents within the elites as well among the population to Musinga, especially in the north, where the power of the court had been quite limited even under the rule of Rwabugiri. Another centre of resistance against the new king was the south, where sons of Rwabugiri formed an alliance to dethrone Musinga.¹³

12 BArch: R 1001/ 277 Reisebericht des Stationschefs Hptm. Bethe von Ujiji nach Ruanda Heinrich Bethe, "Bericht über einen Zug nach Ruanda." *Deutsches Kolonialblatt*, no. 10 (1899): p. 6-12.

13 Jean-Pierre Chrétien, "La Révolte des Ndongutse (1912). Forces Traditionnelles et Pression Coloniale au Rwanda Allemand", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* lx, no. 217 (1972): p. 662; Innocent Kabagema, *Ruanda Unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft 1899-1916*. Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1993, p. 16.

When the Germans arrived on the scene, the kingdom had been slipped into a full-fledged civil war. Therefore, Musinga and his powerful advisers were in desperate need for a powerful ally and decided to welcome the Germans. Even if Kandt had little time for colonial politics but was more interested in scientific exploration, he was well aware that he had to behave like a power-broker in his own right. As in Dar es Salaam, Kandt had to convince the powerful people of his honesty and seriousness. Hence he faced the same problems with the Ruandans as he did with Trotha. The contact zone between European travelers and the powerful chiefs of Eastern Africa was dominated by a mutual display of power and status. Germans usually entered negotiations with African rulers by displaying their military might in order to impress their African counterparts. Powerful African rulers did often not hesitate to step into this competition of display of power. Ramsay and Bethe had been accompanied by a force of nearly hundred Askari, and the Rwanda had answered with the gathering of thousands of armed warriors when both expeditions were about to enter their territory.¹⁴ Kandt, who was accompanied just by a few armed guards, had nothing comparable to offer. When the German mentioned a certain reserve and unwillingness among his Ruandan counterparts to enter in negotiations with him, he made his lack of military might and habit responsible for this behaviour.¹⁵

Kandt, who had read Götzen's account of his visit at the Rwandan court, resorted to the former's tactic and staged a spectacle of fireworks to impress the Rwandans, so that the latter would supply him with food and accept his expedition. Nevertheless, Rwandans did not readily give all the things Kandt asked for. Whereas he was provided with food, substantial insights into the intimacies of the court and the power structures were denied to him. His meeting with the Rwandan king later turned out to be a farce. He did not get a glimpse of Musinga, as he had to mention some month after, but only of a member of the entourage of the King, a certain Pambarugamba. Moreover, he faced increasing problems after his departure from the court. Occasionally he was confronted with attempts of Rwandans to intimidate and to rob him.¹⁶

14 Bethe, *Bericht*, p. 6-12; Hans Ramsay, "Uha, Urundi Und Ruanda." *Mitteilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten*, no. 10 (1897): 177-81; Hans Ramsay, "Über Die Expeditionen Nach Ruanda Und Rikwa-See." *Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin XXV* (1898).

15 *Bericht*, p. 243.

16 *Bericht*, p. 258.

At the end of 1898, Kandt explored the sources of the River Nile, which then was for European geographers one of the last trophies to gather on the African continent. He returned to then shore of Lake Tanganyika, where he stayed at the newly established military post of Usumbura. After some month of rest, he recruited another expedition northwards and finally settled at the peninsula of Ishangi, where he built his settlement “Bergfrieden”. It took Kandt, who, after his own words, was dependent on the god-will of his Ruandan neighbors, more than two months to build his small wooden house, the roof of which was thatched with reeds. It was of such poor quality that Kandt continued to sleep in his tent.¹⁷ Kandt’s settlement was thought to be the starting point for further expeditions, but shortly after the German felt seriously ill. He only recovered after months of being close to death. He was at that time in a precarious situation.

Admittedly Kandt lacked the resources for threatening gestures as Bethe and Ramsay had at their disposal. He had to resort to negotiations, something that may have been closer to his personality than an overtly aggressive approach. Nevertheless, Kandt had something that Bethe and Ramsay did not have: time. While Bethe and Ramsay arrived with all their military power, they had to leave after a few days. As I have argued elsewhere, the colonial expedition was a multilayered endeavor. For German colonizers it served as tool for conquest and introducing colonial politics as it was the most important context for the production of colonial knowledge. This made the chiefs and kings the main source for their understanding of local politics. Contacts with other agents of local politics were usually rare, and clever chiefs were well advised to control the channels of communication with the Germans.¹⁸ This worked well as long the Germans stayed only for a short period, but became increasingly difficult when their presence continued. For African rulers the best strategy was to isolate the colonizer from contacts with local societies. But Kandt stayed and he did this for nearly two years. Bethe’s and Ramsay’s military power did not open to them the door to the inner circles of the Ruandan elites, but Kandt was successively capable to look behind the veil. After nearly a year, Kandt succeeded to meet the actual king Musinga, who, as he was informed at this occasions, was hitherto concealed from

¹⁷ Kandt, *Bericht*, p. 259.

¹⁸ Michael Pesek, *Koloniale Herrschaft in Deutsch-Ostafrika. Expeditionen, Militär und Verwaltung Seit 1880* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2005)

him.¹⁹

It is often argued by historians of colonialism that the establishment of colonial rule was done either by conquest or by manipulating local power structures. Kandt lacked the resources for conquest, while he had insufficient knowledge about Rwandans and their power game to manipulate them. The production of the knowledge was for Kandt an arduous, often inconsistent and slow-moving process. But contrary to Bethe and Ramsay, he did not confine himself to the court as the only source of information. On the other hand, Rwandan court watched closely over all of Kandt's steps. Musinga seemed to perceive the German neither as a threat nor a powerful agent. However, the court was quite unsure about the intentions of Europeans at that time. In the world view of the Rwandan elites, which, as some historians note, was grounded on a dichotomy of strength and weakness, Kandt was harmless at best, a fool at worst. This perception gave Kandt a certain freedom of movement that he rarely enjoyed afterward as an official agent of colonial state. In this time, Kandt became a regular visitor to the powerful chiefs and occasionally to the King's court. His residence "Bergfrieden" developed into a small village, where his African porters and workers settled and refugees of all sorts sought some protection.

While Kandt was becoming the first permanent German resident in Rwanda, the region came into the focus of high imperial politics. Three colonial powers asserted rights to territories in the region. Great Britain demanded the Ankole region, and Germany and Belgian came into conflict about the demarcation line between their colonies, especially around Lake Kivu. German expeditions intensified their presence in the corridor between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Kivu, while the Belgians tried to get a foothold there and established a post near Shangugu. On several occasions, Belgian and German troops only narrowly avoided armed clashes and therefore, the rivaling powers agreed to the establishment of a border commission to settle their claims.²⁰ In 1899, the commanding officers in the region, Bethe for the German side and Hecq for the Belgians, signed a treaty that fixed the frontier line till a future joint border commission would

19 Kandt, "Bericht des Forschungsreisenden Dr. Richard Kandt aus Ruanda", *Mitteilungen von Forschungsreisenden und Gelehrten aus den deutschen Schutzgebieten* 14, no. 2 (1901): p. 115; Richard Kandt, "Nachrichten von R. Kandt am Kivusees." *Globus* 78 (1900): pp. 99-100; Kandt, *Bericht*, p. 254.

20 Roger Heremans and Emmanuel Ntezimana, *Journal de la Mission de Save 1899-1905* (Ruhengeri: Editions universitaires du Rwanda, 1987), p. 36.

find a final solution. The commission started its work in 1901 and Kandt occasionally contributed some expertise. In the same year, the first military post on the soil of the Ruandan Kingdom was established at Shangi, only some miles west from Kandt's "Bergfrieden". The German occupation of the interlacustrine region was more directed towards a demonstration of presence within the context of high imperial politics than it followed the paradigms of colonial politics towards the local population.

The Resident

In 1902, Kandt returned home to Germany, where he finished his remarkable and commercially successful book "Caput Nili". The former outsider, who was often met with some pitying smile by his contemporaries had turned into a widely acknowledged expert on Rwanda. Three years later Kandt returned to German East Africa, where – with Götzen as the new Governor and Franz Stuhlmann as his vice-governor – a new generation of German colonial officials had replaced the colonial military that had dominated colonial politics over the preceding 15 years. Götzen as well as Stuhlmann were interested in Kandt for several reasons. Götzen, who had visited the Rwandan Court some years before, held a certain affinity towards the region. Moreover, he hoped that the interlacustrine region with its, as Götzen saw it, well-established kingdoms could be formed into a new model for Germans colonial politics similar to the British model of indirect rule. Upon Kandt's return to the colony at the end of 1905, Götzen quickly introduced him to his schemes for the interlacustrine region and took him on an expedition to Bukoba. Shortly after their arrival, Götzen had to return to the coast, when he was informed about news that the south of the colony was in full rebellion against Germans. Kandt, meanwhile, travelled further to his beloved Rwanda. The Maji-Maji-uprising, as the rebellion came later to be known in history books, did not affect the region, but it led to the downfall of Götzen as the Governor and to a certain degree also to a turnaround in German colonial politics, which Götzen had already anticipated in his administration but was not able to go through against the resistance of the military establishment both in the colony and in Berlin.

The next two years Kandt settled in Bwakira, a place more situated in the centre of the

kingdom and therefore much closer to the residence of the King. This vicinity reveals the transformation of Kandt from a freelanced explorer and occasional colonial agent into a full-fledged colonial official. Although Kandt might have been cautious not to behave in an aggressive and provocative way, – he still commanded over too few resources to present himself as a powerful agent –, he could not avoid this perception by his African counterparts. Foremost he was still interested in the geographical and ethnographic exploration of Rwanda. But simultaneously, he was appointed for several governmental missions, for instance to give support to the German and Belgian delineation commission and to host official delegations which were sent by the government to investigate to economic possibilities of the region.

In Dar es Salaam, Götzen was succeeded by Freiherr von Rechenberg, a former judge at the native court of Tanga. He was sent by the newly appointed state secretary for the colonies, Bernhard Dernburg, in order to implement reforms in the administration of the colony. Rechenberg continued the politics of Götzen in regard to the interlacustrine region. In a degree of 1903, Götzen had announced the establishment of several residencies in the region, including the former military districts of Bukoba and Mwanza as well as Ruanda and Burundi, where Germans had only been able to enter but not to administrate or to exert a substantial political influence. Götzen's outline for the politics of the future residents saw the role of German officials in serving as a diplomat and adviser at the court of the African ruler rather than an overlord. This suited well into what Kandt had done all the years before, and it may not come as a surprise that Kandt became somehow an exemplary figure of this new policy. According to his long-standing colleague and friend, the explorer Hans Meyer, Kandt's distance to the established colonial bureaucracy and military made him an interesting figure for the reformists like Rechenberg and Dernburg.²¹

Up to 1907, Ruanda had been administered by the nearby district of Urundi, and its colonial officials had visited the kingdom only a few times. In September 1902, the new officer at Usumbura, Beringe, had visited Musinga at his residence in Nyanza. While the expedition moved further north and eventually left Ruanda after it had explored the North, one if its

21 Hans Meyer, "In Ruanda bei Richard Kandt 1911", *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde (Sonderband zur Hundertjahrfeier der Gesellschaft)* (1928): p. 148.

members, Lieutenant von Parisch, returned to Nyanza in January 1903 to investigate complaints against Musinga by the White Fathers. The missionaries accused the king of mistreatment of his subjects and von Parisch used the investigation to demonstrate the existence of a new power in the region. Musinga was sentenced to a fine of 40 cows and to issue a public excuse. In 1904, Beringe's successor at Usumbura, von Grawert, made his entry into Ruandan politics with a punitive expedition against some villages in Northern Ruanda. Contrary to his predecessor, von Grawert was willing to support Musinga in his efforts to enhance the control of the court over the region. Shortly after von Grawert returned to Usumbura, he heard of rumours about his own death. These rumours were a prelude to an open rebellion against the presence of the White Fathers and moreover against Europeans in the region. The historian Kabagema notes that it was the court who was behind the attacks on the missionaries, but von Grawert readily accepted Musinga's explanation that the rebellion's aim was to dethrone him, and that it was initiated mainly from outside the kingdom, notably from Mpororo and from foreign traders.²²

When Kandt returned to Ruanda as the designed new colonial official in the region, he found a region in turmoil. The occasional punitive expeditions of the officers stationed at Usumbura had little effects on the Ruandan power game. The officers did not follow a coherent strategy and supported either this or the other side. In 1907, two new military outposts were installed at Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, both located at the border to the Belgian Congo. Their influence was limited to the nearby villages and their main task was to watch at the Belgians. A new player in this game had emerged with the arrival of the catholic missionaries, who increasingly intervened into conflicts between the king and his opponents. This caused many frictions between the German colonial officials and the mostly French missionaries. Kandt himself would preserve a certain distance to the White Fathers during his service in Ruanda.

Kandt built his new residence at Kigali, which then was only a small village on a hill of the same name. The place of the residence was in some distance from the compound of the Rwandan king. This was to some extent atypical for a German administrative posts as they were built in other places of the colony but typical for the newly established residencies like Bukoba or

22 Kabagema, *Ruanda*, p. 92.

Mwanza. The spatial distance was an expression of the role intended for the Imperial Residents and Kandt narrowly interpreted his role as a diplomatic one. At Kigali, Kandt was mainly a self-supporter. All what he needed for the construction of the *boma* he had to raise locally. It took Kandt again several months to construct the first houses, which he built exclusively from local materials and with local labour force. The construction of the *boma* was the first development project of the colonial state and it remained up to the First World War the only one. Kandt reported little problems. Musinga had ordered to support Kandt with all means, so that there was an abundance of workers and wood.²³ The residency of Ruanda remained isolated from the admittedly highly undeveloped infrastructure of the colonial state. When the Imperial government had to decide the degree of engagement in the region, the supporters of a seizure pointed the country's richness and healthiness, which made it an ideal place for European settlement. Nevertheless, during Kandt's residency the kingdom was literally sealed off from the influx of traders, settlers and, to certain extent, of missionaries. Musinga was quite successful to convince Grawert and Kandt that the presence of too many foreigners was the cause for the previous years' turmoil. Therefore, the government in Dar es Salaam therefore restricted the permission of settlement for Europeans as well as for coastal traders. There was only a small community of them at the southern shore of Lake Kivu.

In this time, Kandt and Musinga developed somehow a close relationship. The German was an often seen visitor at the court, where he was always welcomed with pomp and friendliness. Musinga might not have been the powerful ruler as he was sometimes portrayed by European travellers, but he seemed to be an able diplomat, who succeeded to manipulate Kanyonge²⁴, as Kandt was called in Ruanda, in favour of his schemes to enhance his control over Rwanda and to limit the influence of the missionaries. Musinga's politics towards the German were all about performance. The highly ceremonial meetings with Kandt, in which his *intore*, or life guards, used to perform their dances, the subsequent banquets and intimate talks, demonstrated Musinga's view of the relationship as one between equals. This was mainly directed at his subjects and opponents. For the king the yoke of German rule had been not a

23 Meyer, *In Ruanda*, p. 150.

24 This means "crane" in Kinyarwanda, a term that indicates some royal habitus.

heavy one: their interferences into Rwandan politics had been quite limited as it had been with the demands for tribute. Kandt's participation in the courtly ceremonies could be easily taken as a sign that Kandt was part of the court. Indeed, as Kabagema notes, many Rwandans used to see Kandt either as belonging to the King's entourage or even as a subject of the king.²⁵ This perception was not without reason. Under the residency of Kandt, German increasingly supported the King and his court. Most of the punitive expeditions that occurred in this period were aimed at the suppression of his opponents.

A reason for this was that Musinga seemed to be generally successful to monopolize the communication of his subjects with the Imperial Resident. The king was among the few notables of Rwanda who spoke Swahili, the lingua franca of German colonial rule in Eastern Africa. Moreover Kandt provided him with a secretary from Karagwe, who took care of the correspondence with the Germans. Outside the court, both Kandt and his subordinates faced serious problems of coming into contact with lesser chiefs or with the population. When their expeditions arrived, they found empty villages and frightened chiefs, who refused to talk with them. According to Kabagema, the court regarded the interaction with the Germans as its very own domain, and had therefore tried to sanction extensive contacts of Rwandans either by intimidation, spread of rumors and superstitions about the Germans and their intentions or by issuing orders that directly forbade such contacts. By isolating the Germans, Musinga hoped to suppress the emergence of rivals and to avoid a shift of alliance towards them.

The Germans were well aware of their precarious situation, but were rarely able to break through the cage of isolation that the court had built around them. Kandt's number two, Gudovius, proposed to solve the problem by intensifying the travel activities of colonial officials, but this proposal lacked any prospect of success. There were simply too few colonial officials in Rwanda to make a difference. Kandt came with another proposal: He planned to install a new sort of chiefs who would be under the direct control of the residency. Nevertheless, during his residency there was only one chief, who was appointed as such a governmental chief. But this appointment had little effect on the overall political situation.

25 Kabagema, *Ruanda*, p.124.

Epilogue

The colonial state remained fiction not only for Rwandans, who only occasionally felt its presence, but also for Kandt, who remained to some extent isolated from the resources and bureaucratic framework that the state was meant to provide to him. The question of resources available to German colonial agents shaped the possibilities of their politics. Both Kandt and the Rwandan court were well aware of this. The German Resident had to calculate the outlook of a military campaign with only few troops. Musinga had to have in mind the presence of German troops in neighbouring Burundi and Karagwe. The connection between resources and the preference for either war and diplomacy can be seen in cases when there was a dramatic change, for instance with the arrival of new troops or a powerful expedition. But also the Africans were well aware of the resources available to Germans and reacted accordingly. Musinga knew that Kandt was a lonely and even powerless explorer, but he knew also that Kandt was not alone, there were other Germans around. The resources actually available were displayed by both sides in highly ceremonial encounters.

Kandt was a lonely imperialist in a twofold way. Firstly, he remained largely isolated from contacts with ordinary Rwandans. The court was quite successful to control Kandt's contacts with lesser chiefs and ordinary Rwandans. Secondly, Kandt kept, or was forced to do so, at distance to the colonial bureaucracy. The lines of communication, which connected Kandt to his superiors in Dar es Salaam, were long. Reports from Kandt and orders sent to him took weeks if not months to reach their destination. His superiors had little knowledge about the situation in Rwanda, while Kandt had limited insights into the intentions and schemes of his superiors. He had never been socialized within the colonial apparatus. Quite to the opposite, Kandt, according to Meyer, was chosen exactly because he had no connections to the worlds of the colonial military and bureaucracy. Kandt, like many of his colleagues in a similar situation, developed an autonomy that placed him to a certain degree outside of the colonial state and its politics. Kandt himself might have seen his role towards the colonial state in very ambitious terms. As an explorer without an official mandate, his relationship with the colonial state had its up and

downs. In *Caput Nili* he described the colonial agents with a caustic criticism. Despite all the statements sent home to Germany regarding the heroism and hardships of life in the colony, they enjoyed a degree of luxury they would have never been able to afford at home.²⁶ When he became the Imperial Resident for Rwanda, he became notorious for his unwillingness to see himself as a colonial bureaucrat. In his communications with subordinates he often advised them to act independently and not to wait for his orders. To the commanding officer of Gisenyi he wrote for instance: “Do what you think it is the best, but if you act, do not refer afterwards to me as your superior.”²⁷

The loneliness of the imperialist had its price also in his mental and physical constitution. According to some Germans who had visited Kandt during his years in Ruanda, he was a rather difficult or queer character. Hans Mayer noted that Kandt avoided contacts with other Europeans. He did not even develop contacts with his German subordinates beyond what was absolutely necessary with respect to fulfilling his official duties.²⁸ The contact to his family in Germany consisted of occasional letters to his mother and some close relatives. He never got married, although he had a love affair which resulted in the birth of child. It seems that Kandt found in Rwanda an exile from a world he felt alienated. But this exile ate him up. Hans Mayer described him as on the verge of a physical and mental collapse. He suffered from exhaustion and depression.²⁹ The lonely imperialist was a melancholic. Kandt’s melancholy is at best documented in his book “Caput Nili”. It is a description of a travel into the “darkness of Africa”, which is the scenery of a walk towards to depths of his own personality. Kandt constantly struggled with his beloved Africa and at the end he had to capitulate to his physical and mental condition and to return home to Germany. Shortly after he arrived, the First World War begun. Kandt participated as military doctor in the battles of Verdun and at the River of Ysere. In June 1917, he died during a gas attack at the Eastern Front.³⁰

Two years later, Germany's imperial dreams in Africa found their end, too.

26 Kandt, *Caput Nili*, p. 16.

27 RU 6692/198A Kandt an den Posten Kissenyi, 1.9.1908.

28 Meyer, *In Ruanda*, p. 153.

29 Meyer, *In Ruanda*, p. 154, Bindseil, *Ruanda im Lebensbild*, p. 61.

30 Bindseil, *Ruanda im Lebensbild*, p. 74.

