

The **Twa**, a pygmy group, are seen as socially inferior, but the **Tutsi** and **Hutu** groups are made up of both commoners and aristocrats. *The majority of these two groups are commoners.* They speak the same language, practice the same religions and live in the same areas. The **Tutsi** have held central power in Burundi throughout much of its precolonial, colonial and postcolonial history. In precolonial times and even under the Belgians, relations between Hutu and Tutsi were complex, sometimes antagonistic and often complimentary. However, in post colonial times power struggles between various factions of **Tutsi** have led to an enormous split between **Hutu** and **Tutsi**, as ethnicity has become a pawn in this power struggle. In Burundi, the **Tutsi** have been divided into the **Tutsi-banyaruguru** and the **Tutsi-hima**, with the **Banyaruguru** being associated with the monarchy and the **Hima**, who have held power in the postcolonial governments. Much of the power struggle in modern day Burundi has been between these two groups. The **Hutu** have been brutally suppressed under most of the regimes in Burundi and a system of *de facto* exists in Burundi. Economically, **Tutsi** and **Hutu** both farmed and kept livestock. The difference was in degree rather than in livelihood. **Tutsi** emphasised cattle, **Hutu** emphasised agriculture.

In Rwanda and in Burundi, although there are three clearly labelled ethnicities, **Batutsi**, **Bahutu** and **Batwa**, the long history of coexistence, intermarriage and common history makes these categories hard to define. People look very similar and physical distinctions are good identifiers, there are very tall, fair **Hutu**, short, dark **Tutsi** and tall **Batwa**. Regional differences are as important in the recent history of both these countries as ethnicity.

The **Twa** are considered to be a pygmy group, but as mentioned above, it is often hard to tell the **Twa** from the general population. Some are hunter-gathers, some are potters and some are in other mainstream professions. Under the pre-colonial state the **Twa** associated with the court were seen as either buffoons or spies. This stereotype, whether true or not, have increased the stigmatization of this group.