

Colloquium on African Languages and Linguistics (CALL)
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***A new trilingual edition of Eugène Hurel's
1922 collection of Rwandan folktales***

Tales, Fables and Narratives of Rwanda

by

Eugène Hurel†

transcribed in the scientific notation for Kinyarwanda
and translated into English and German

by

Matthias Brack, Leo Sibomana and John Doldo IV



RÜDIGER KÖPPE VERLAG · KÖLN · 2023

Eugène Hurel (1878-1936)

was a French missionary of the *Pères Blancs* ('White Fathers')
spent 5 years in former Tanganyika: Island **Ukerewe** (in Lake Victoria) and Kagondo (1902 - 1907)
and most his remaining life in **Rwanda** (1908 - 1919 and 1922 - 1936)

Hurel's main publications on Kinyarwanda (runyarwanda):

- *Manuel de Langue Kinyarwanda, comprenant la Grammaire et un choix de contes et proverbes* (Berlin 1911)*
- *La Poésie chez les Primitifs ou Contes, Fables, Récits et Proverbes du Rwanda (Lac Kivu)* (Brussels 1922) (contains the oldest collection of Rwandan folktales!)
- *Dictionnaire français-runyarwanda et runyarwanda-français* (Kabgayi 1926)

*Latest edition: *Grammaire Kinyarwanda* (6th ed. Kabgayi 1959) (revised and extended, but without *contes* and *proverbes*)

BIBLIOTHÈQUE-CONGO

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N° IX

La Poésie chez les Primitifs

ou

Contes, Fables, Récits et Proverbes

du RWANDA (Lac Kivu)

PAR

le R. P. Eugène HUREL
des Missionnaires d'Afrique
(Pères Blancs)



BRUXELLES
GOEMAERE, IMPRIMEUR DU ROI
ÉDITEUR
Rue de la Limite, 27

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Eugène Hurel (1878-1936) published in 1922 a collection of Rwandan folktales and proverbs with French translations. Now, about hundred years later, we present a new trilingual edition of his book. We have transcribed Hurel's old-fashioned Rwandan texts in the scientific notation for Kinyarwanda which marks lengths and heights of vowel tones, and translated all 40 folktales into English and German. We have omitted the proverbs because there already exists an abundant literature of Rwandan proverbs in many languages, both in book form and in the internet. We have also abstained from reproducing Hurel's original French translation of the tales, which only was of a rudimentary word-to-word character. We have left out Hurel's own introduction which reflects the racist attitude that was quite common about hundred years ago not only to colonialists but, unfortunately, also to missionaries; we feel that it cannot be publicised any more today.

Undoubtedly, the folktales contained herein belong amongst the most valuable treasures of the old Rwandan culture, which definitely should be preserved for posterity. With this trilingual edition of Hurel's book, we want to make them available to a wider, not only Francophile audience.

The Kinyarwanda and English versions of the tales are presented in a two-paged layout (left pages: Kinyarwanda, right pages: English), arranged into small numbered paragraphs starting at the same height on both sides. In the second part of the book, the German translations of the tales follow in single-paged layout, using the same numbering of paragraphs to enable the reader to look up the Rwandan source of the text. A large number of footnotes give not only linguistic, but also cultural, ethnographical and historical information and explain the meanings of most Rwandan names. In this form, we hope that the present book will serve not only students of the language Kinyarwanda in the Western world, but also those Rwandans who are interested in the classical literature of their own country.

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Eugène Hurel • Tales, Fables and Narratives of Rwanda

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Hurel's old-fashioned Rwandan texts have been transcribed in the modern scientific notation for Kinyarwanda (reflecting lengths and heights of the **vowel tones**) and modern orthography

Kinyarwanda and English texts:

in two-paged layout (left: K, right: E) with aligned numbered paragraphs

German texts: in single-paged layout, using the same numbering of paragraphs

Footnotes with linguistic, cultural, ethnographical and historical information
and explanations of most Rwandan names

We left out the proverbs and sayings (for reasons of space and layout)

We did not include Hurel's (rudimentary) French word-to-word translation

We decided to omit Hurel's introduction (for ethical reasons)

[Facsimile of original book: available from CLASSIC REPRINTS (Pranava books, India, 15-s990011309784-576 h)]

1. Umukoóbwa uhiinduka igisaabo

1. Nguciíre umuganí! Nkubaámbuze umuganí! N'úúzaatúruka i Káamuganí azaasaanga ubukoombe bw'úmuganí búziritse ku mugaanda w'ínzu!

2. Abakoóbwa baárahágurutse arí bataanu, baja gukúura intámyi. Nuuko bahuura n'ábageenzi, barabábaza bati "Turi beezá?" Abaáandi barabásubiza bati "Muri beezá, aríko umwé ukó murí bané arabaruta." Nuuko baramúkubita arahwéera.

3. Ngo biigíre imbere, arahéembuuka arabákurikira. Baroongera bahuura n'ábaáandi bageenzi, barabábaza bati "Aho turi beezá?" Abaáandi bati "Muri beezá, aríko umwé murí mwe arabaruta." Baroongera baramuhoondagura, arahwéera. Barageenda.

4. Biigiye imbere, ahiinduka igisaabo¹¹ kirabákurikira. Basaanga abashootsi, barabábaza bati "Mbeéga, mwaa bashootsi mwe! Turi beezá?" Bati "Muri beezá, aríko murutwa n'aáko gasaabo." Nuuko agasaabo barakámena, barageenda.

5. Nuuko kariiyuburura¹², karabákurikira. Barageenda basaa-nga abaáandi bashootsi. Nuuko barabiitóoranya bóose; nuuko hasigara umushootsi umwé ati "Jyeewé, ndatóora aka gasaabo."

6. Abaáandi baramuseka bati "Mbeesé igicumá kizaakumarira ikí?" Arabásubiza ati "Sinaahara igisaabo cy'íinká!" Nuuko aki-
jyaana imuhirá, agiha mushíki wé. Nuuko abaáandi batwaara abakoóbwa barabaroongora.

¹¹ *igisaabo*: 'calabash' (made from a cucurbit, for making butter) or 'milk bottle'. (See the photo on the cover of this book.)

¹² *kariiyuburura*: from *kwiiyuburura*, *-ye* 'to recover, transmute (back)' (lit. 'to pull oneself out', from *kúuburura*, *-ye* 'to pull out' with reflexive infix *-ii-*). Here: it regained its shape.

1. The girl who turned into a calabash¹³

1. Let me tell you a story! I want to fascinate you with the story! Even one who comes from the land of fairy tales will find a bull of a story tied to the pillar of the house.¹⁴

2. Some girls – there were five of them – took off to pluck papyrus to use in weaving. They met some travellers and asked them: "Are we beautiful?" The others answered them: "You are beautiful, but there is one amongst you who surpasses the other four." Thereupon they beat that girl unconscious.

3. Shortly after they went ahead, she recovered and followed them. They continued, met some more travellers and asked them: "So, aren't we beautiful?" The others answered: "You are beautiful, but one amongst you surpasses the others." Again, they beat her up and she fainted. They left.

4. As they went ahead, she turned herself into a calabash and followed them. They met some people taking their cows to drink and asked them: "Hey, you cowherds! Are we beautiful?" The others said: "You are beautiful, but you are outclassed by that little calabash." Now, they broke the little calabash and left.

5. Then, it regained its shape and followed them. They went on and met some other cowherds. Then, these chose one girl each for themselves; so, there was one cowherd left.¹⁵ He said: "For myself, I choose this little calabash."

6. The others laughed at him and said: "Of what use will a calabash be to you?" He answered them: "I couldn't pass up a calabash for cow's milk!" Then he took it home and gave it to his sister. Then the others took the girls along and married them.

¹³ Some elements of this tale are found in [Big] part 8, no. 6.

¹⁴ This is the end of the opening formula [Ru].

¹⁵ There remains one cowherd, the other four having each selected one of the pretentious girls.

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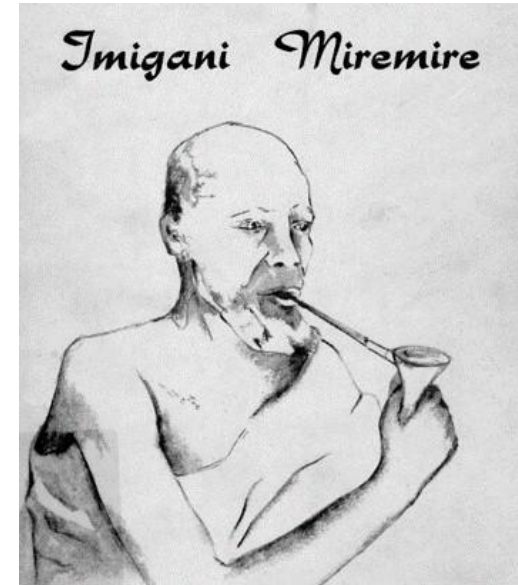
Sulzmann-Stiftung of the University of Mainz

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG):

SFB 1482 „Humandifferenzierung“ (Spokesman: Prof. Nico Nassenstein)

We draw attention to an early collection of Rwandan folktales by the first Rwandan Bishop, Aloys Bigirumwami (1904-1986):

Aloys Bigirumwami: *Imigani miremire* (Nyundo 1971)
(‘Long tales’)
(270 tales, collected from 1932 – 1967,
sorted by teachers and fellow priests)



Many of these tales are variations of some of Hurel's tales, but sometimes with more explicit beginnings (helping to interpret and better understand Hurel's texts)

A selection of 175 of these tales appeared in 3 volumes as:

- *Imigani «Tima-Ngiro» y'u Rwanda – Les contes moraux du Rwanda*, with French translations by Bernardin Muzungu (Butare 1987/89 and Kigali 2013)
- *Märchen und andere Erzählungen aus Ruanda* (Deutsch von G. und M. Redelberger, Hrsg. L. Möller, Speyer 2014)

To finish, a question to the audience:

Part 10 of Bigirumwami's *Imigani miremire* contains 21 folktales out of a collection by **Father Balthazar Gafuku*** (1885–1959), one of the two first Rwandan priests ordained in 1917, published in a school book:

Balthazari Gafuku: Igitabu chy' abany'ecoli bo mu Rwanda (Kabgayi 1929), also known under the title *Nyirambohera*

This was the first book ever written by a Rwandan author!

We could not find it in any library catalogue; it does not even seem to exist in the Diocese of Kabgayi!

Does anybody know or have a copy of it?

*Gafuku's own biography of the first 26 years of his life: *Mein Werdegang* (in German!) (*Afrika-Bote*, Trier 1911)



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Also appeared in Rüdiger Köppe Verlag (Köln):

Matthias Brack / Marie-Grazie Musoni

Wörterbuch Kinyarwanda – Deutsch

mit Einführung in Sprache und Grammatik



Zweite, völlig durchgesehene und erweiterte Auflage

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Legenden, Märchen und Fabeln aus Ruanda

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ausgewählt und ins Deutsche übertragen von

Leo Sibomana und Matthias Brack



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To appear shortly:

Kinyarwanda: An Integrative Approach

by

Leo Sibomana

with

John Doldo IV and Matthias Brack

ifeas (Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien), University of Mainz

Online:

<https://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de/publikationen-2/arbeitspapiere/>

→ see the written announcement by J. Doldo !