

The political vision of the Rwandan kingdom <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/rj.v2i2.6A>

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Abstract: This article discusses the political vision of pre-colonial Rwanda. The authors used oral traditions as privileged sources of the history of pre-colonial Rwanda. Such vision is spotted by means of the analysis of declarations and decisions of the kings of Rwanda where it is possible to identify a net formulation of the political vision. In this regard, the article is focusing on the reforms of ubwiru as formulated by King Mutara Semugeshe. Indeed, these reforms have clearly defined the missions of the kings according to their regnal names during the regular cycles. The authors also have examined through the power management of the kings of Rwanda some elements of political vision. Therefore, it is clear that Rwanda had a conquering vision, a unifying vision and a power sharing vision. These are the visions that guided the daily life during the reigns. The authors conclude that the ideal of the political leaders of pre-colonial Rwanda was to control a wide Rwanda, militarily powerful, populous, economically rich and unified.

Key words : Kingdom, vision, ritual, mission, military

Introduction

Did the Rwanda kingdom have a political vision? In case it had one, then we need to understand what that vision was, or else what were the nature and the character of that vision. If we take vision to mean long term planning, then we need to check areas of power management where that planning occurred. In our view, there are two ways of checking the presence of that vision. First, there has to be statements of leaders of Rwanda presenting that vision. In that case, we can check in the oral traditions or written versions of pre-colonial Rwandan history traces of long term planning details. The

second possibility is to trace political activities that survived for a long time and that presuppose their prior planning.

For example, there are a number of decisions that certain kings were taking. Then those decisions got perpetuated over decades, over other reigns, and even over centuries. This continued up to the point of becoming what Kagame called “firm traditions” (Kagame, 1972, p.10). We can consider for instance the somewhat friendship between the kingdom of Karagwe and Rwanda since Ndahiro Cyamatara up to Kigeri Rwabugiri. Another example concerns the perpetuation of the production of ibisigo from Ruganzu Ndori (by Nyirarumaga) up to the end of the kingdom. Even the perpetuation of Ubucurabwenge, i.e., the genealogy of Rwandan kings together with queen mothers. Another example concerns the tradition of queen mothers not to get married. Abiru, kingship ritualists, and other leaders calculated that given their influence at the royal court and in the kingdom politics, remarriage of queen mothers would cause disorder in the succession principle. This tradition got respected with the exception of Nyakiyaga, the mother of Cyirima Rugwe and Ncenderi, mother of Kigeri Nyamuhesha. Murorunkwere was also wrongly accused of being pregnant. Also, the *Ubwiru* institution underwent many reforms in order to survive and remain meaningful.

This paper looks at certain features of the planning that was done overtly and the political culture that guided the pre-colonial Rwandan political system. The first area where a long term planning appears is through the naming of the political entity that the Nyinginya dynasty and their allies built progressively. They called it “u Rwanda”, which means expansion. And indeed they expanded the territory of Rwanda over decades, reigns and centuries. But their expansion was not just about territory. They also incorporated several other clans and lineages as they were subjugating them. They included them in the power structure and at some point the Rwandan kingdom was the kingdom of all those clans and lineages. So, there was a vision about territory expansion and a vision about people or social incorporation in power structures. These two visions are not clearly stated but they can be identified through the reading of the political history of the Rwandan kingdom.

However, there is one case of an open formulation of the mission of kings per reign, or to put it more correctly, per cycles of kings. This was the result of the reforms undertaken by Mutara Semugeshi in the 16th century.

1. Political and military vision through the missions of kings

Cycles of kings had existed prior to the Mutara Semugeshi reform. For instance, we see the repetition of reign names such as Yuhi, Ndahiro and Nsoro and Ruganzu up to Semugeshi. But, it is Semugeshi who decided over names to keep, and kings' mission from his reign onwards. Prior to Semugeshi, Rwanda had had kings who had implemented significant reforms. For example, Kigeri I Mukobanya is said to have initiated the process of centralization of the country. Ruganzu II Ndori had rescued the monarchy of Rwanda. Mutara I Semugeshi came as a monarch who made more reforms in the esoteric code and in the royal ideology. *Abiru* consider him as the genial innovator (Kagame, 1951, p.48).

Semugeshi took a very strong decision of suppressing some of the existing names of reign. He put away the following names: Ndahiro, Ruganzu and Nsoro. The first was said to bear misfortune because Ndahiro Cyamatara lost the dynastic drum *Rwoga*. Ruganzu was also a name of previous two Kings who were killed by the enemy (Ruganzu I Bwimba and Ruganzu II Ndori). The name Nsoro was put aside because it was used also in a neighbouring monarchy of Bugesera. Then, Semugeshi introduced a new name of Mutara (Kagame, 1972, pp.113-114, Bourgeois, 1954, p.45, p.67). That is why Semugeshi ceased to be called Nsoro Semugeshi and took the name of Mutara Semugeshi.

So, four names remained in the cycles of Kings and took the following order: Cyirima, Kigeri, Mibambwe, Yuhi. Mutara was added to that list and became also a name of the first place in the cycle like Cyirima. For the first cycle it was Mutara, Kigeri, Mibambwe and Yuhi; while for the second it should be Cyirima, Kigeri, Mibambwe and Yuhi, etc.

Thus, Mutara and Cyirima came once for eight reigns, while the others occurred once after four reigns. Since then, the genealogy became as follows:

New cycles of reigns from Mutara I Semugeshi onwards

| Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 | Cycle 3 | Cycle 4 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mutara I Semugeshi | 5. Cyirima II Rujugira | 9. Mutara II Rwogera | 13. Mutara III Rudahigwa. |
| 2. Kigeri II Nyamuheshera | 6. Kigeri III Ndabarasa | 10. Kigeri IV Rwabugiri | 14. Kigeri V Ndahindurwa |
| 3. Mibambwe II Gisanura | 7. Mibambwe III Sentabyo | 11. Mibambwe IV Rutarindwa | |
| 4. Yuhi III Mazimpaka | 8. Yuhi IV Gahindiro | 12. Yuhi V Musinga | |

It is very important to note that on the above list there is one king who is omitted, i.e., Karemera Rwaka. The latter was officially enthroned in Yuhi IV Mazimpaka lifetime and succeeded him as an acting king. As such, he is believed to have resigned when Rujugira, the legitimate heir, arrived from Gisaka to acquire the throne (Kagame, 1972, pp.129 and 134). Some scholars found this narrative not convincing enough. For example, Vansina (2001, p.132-135) believed that Rwaka was a legitimate king who got deposed by Rujugira.

At the same time, in this reform of Semugeshi, particular commitments were dedicated to the monarchs according to their names of reigns. In this respect, the Kings Mutara and Cyirima would be Kings of cattle (D’Hertefeldt, Coupez, 1964, p.46, p.98). That is why they would be organizers of the ritual of watering. They were obliged to stay in Nduga and to cross the Nyabarongo River once when they were going to organize the ritual of watering. Then, they had to remain in Bwanacyambwe until death. Kigeri and

Mibambwe were the Kings of conquest and war (D’Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.38). This seems to have been so since Kigeri I and Mibambwe I. They could thus move everywhere, inside and outside the country. On the other hand, the monarchs called Yuhi were Kings of the Fire, which means that their duty was to keep the long life of the royal dynasty symbolized by the permanence of the fire of Gihanga, the supposed founder of the dynasty. They were also Kings of cattle. The esoteric code *Ubwiru* committed them to live in the Nduga region and never cross the Nyabarongo River (Kagame, 1947, pp.385-386; Kagame, 1952, p.130; Chrétien, 2000, p.103; Wrigley, 1996, p.200). Consider for instance the following strophe from the ritual of fire (*inzira y’umuriro*):

« *Umwami ubyarira umuriro niYuhi*
Akima i Nduga
Akaraguza ari i Nduga
Akeza imana ari i Nduga
Agatsinda ari i Nduga
Akagaba ingabo ari iNduga
Zigahabwa umugaba
Zikajya kumutsindira. [...]
Ntiyambuka uruzi rwa Mwogo
N’urwa Nyabarongo.” (D’Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.54)

But this does not mean that these new commitments just occurred in practice like that. Some kings of cattle were obliged by circumstances to protect the country against invasions and acted militarily in a successful manner. On the other hand, circumstances obliged monarchs to move out of the territory in which the Abiru advocated them to reside permanently.

But these missions got respected most of the time. The conquest mission owed to the fact that Rwanda envisioned to be a very big country in terms of size. The name “Rwanda” itself means “kwanda” i.e. to expand. In order to reach this, military campaigns against

neighbouring countries were necessary. The increase of subjects politically speaking or people socially speaking through conquest was needed. It is people who would later become tax payers, economic producers and *ingabo* (militarily). The demographic increase was also targeted using cultural sensitization. There was a belief that power comes from belonging to a very big family or owning a very big number of subjects.

Then since Rwanda envisioned to expand, its kings were required to be strong warriors. The ritual of enthronization that informs us how the new king was enthroned, shows us how he was prepared “ritually”, psychologically and socially to be the conqueror *par excellence*. Consider these few passages:

“Barakwimitse ngo utsinde

Uburundi n’Ubunyabungo

N’amahanga yandi yose

Adatura umwami w’i Rwanda.” (D’Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.240)

“Bagashyira ho ihembe ry’inzovu

Umwami akarikandagira hejuru

Ngo umwami ahore ari inzovu

Ahore aheza amahanga hasi.”(D’Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.264)

As a result, the majority (or all) of the Kigeri kings were either great conquerors or great warriors. Crises in military domain are considered not as failures but as misfortunes. See for instance why Ndahiro Cyamatare got one *ubwiru* ritual, Inzira ya Gicurasi, how Kibilira River is never crossed by Rwandan kings, how names of Ruganzu, Nsoro and Ndahiro get removed from the reigning names. All this is to avoid contradicting the conquering vision.

However, there are also exceptions. In the remainder of this section, some of those exceptions are emphasized. For example, in the ritual of fire of the esoteric code, it is indicated that all monarchs bearing the first name of Yuhi were forbidden from moving

out of the Nduga region. They were obliged to be enthroned there and to stay there until their death. Yet, Yuhi II Gahima II crossed the Nyabarongo River and went to Nzaratsi in the Nyantango region. Is this an infringement of the ubwiru code or is it because this tradition had not yet existed at the time of Gahima II as Kagame argues? (Kagame, 1972, p.84)

There is another example that stresses how Yuhi V Musinga was obliged to cross the Nyabarongo River: In 1925, the Belgian Governor asked the King Musinga to go and meet His Majesty the prince Léopold of Belgium, at Nyabitare, near to the Nyabarongo River. Musinga knew well the utmost rejection of Ubwiru tradition by the Belgian administrators and Missionaries. He understood that he was not going to convince the Belgian prince to meet him at Nyanza. So he decided to overstep the esoteric code and managed to go to that meeting. But he invented an intermediate solution to that issue. He put in front of him a diviner who was chasing the angry spirits of the King's forefathers all the way, so that the journey would be somewhat conform to the norm (Bourgeois, 1954, p.46).

However, due to the difficulties of establishing a chronology in oral culture, it is not easy to date absolutely the setting of the above missions. Kagame attributed the "reform" to Mutara Semugeshi, namely in sixteenth century (Kagame, 1972, p.38), while Vansina was attributing the "reform" to CyirimaRujugira (Vansina, 2001, p.265). Kagame based his statement from the ritualists who considered King Mutara Semugeshi as a reformist and genial inventor (Kagame, 1951, p.40). Vansina makes his point not from a source like an historical tale, but from a logical conclusion. The first argument of Vansina is that Rujugira's predecessor took the reign name Karemera, which does not occur in the cycle and therefore the rules about cycles did not exist (Vansina 2000a, p. 400). Our counter argument is that according the new rules, Musinga should have been named Mibambwe instead of Yuhi, and Rudahigwa should have been named Cyirima instead of Mutara. When those names were not appropriate to the new rules, does it mean that the rules didn't exist before their reigns? The Vansina's second argument is that Cyirima

Rujugira lived in Bwanacyambwe province at the beginning of his reign in contrary to the rules which state that Cyirima or Mutara must live in Nduga province at that time (Vansina, 2001, p.120). Our counter argument is that Vansina himself wrote that Rujugira came from Gisaka with his son Ndabarasa to depose King Rwaka when Rwaka lived in Rukoma (Vansina, 2001, p.133). Resisting to Rujugira, the prince Nama, a brother of Rwaka, attacked Rujugira from Bugamba province and was defeated by the Rujugira's loyal armies at Hogwe at Rukoma border (Vansina, 2001, p.134). This implies that Rujugira did not live in Bwanacyambwe at that time. Much more, our last counter argument derives from a useful contradiction of Vansina. This scholar wrote that during the 18th century, the main residences of the kings were located within the Nyabarongo river loop, precisely in Rukoma and around Kamonyi mountain. He added that the Rukoma area continued to be the core of the kingdom until the end of the reign of Rujugira where it has been moved to Bwanacyambwe (Vansina 2001, p.108-109). It means that Rujugira lived in Bwanacyambwe during his last days accordingly to Vansina himself and ritualist rules. It is important to know that in royal rituals, the area of Nduga referred to the land located within the Nyabarongo loop and Mwogo river opposite to the Bwanacyambwe area referring to the lands located in the eastern Nyabarongo River. Therefore, the statement of Vansina is an opinion which is not necessarily acceptable (Vansina, 2000a, p. 400-401, 2001, p 120).

Concerning military matters, the esoteric code tells us that the Kings called Cyirima were committed to the wealth of the country, in the sense that they were monarchs of cattle. However, as Rujugira was facing a very strong threat from neighbouring kingdoms against Rwanda, he could not ignore war issues. It is in that context that he set a strategy which made him one of the major military references among the Rwandan Kings. He faced militarily three countries: Burundi (south), Gisaka (east), and Ndorwa (north). In order to defeat them, he chose a defensive strategy against Burundi, as this was the strongest among the three enemies. And then Rwanda made offensive against Gisaka and Ndorwa. The strategy of Rujugira kept away that threat. Records also attribute him the following famous formula: "*u Rwanda ruratera ntiruterwa*" (Rwanda does attack; it is by

no means attacked) (Kagame, 1972, p.137). So Rwanda deserved such a motto from a King who was not ritually destined to war, just because the circumstances had obliged him to cope with a new situation. Vansina (2001, p.155) suggested that the motto is a boastfulness. Yet again, the latter hides a vision attitude.

Indeed, only the Kigeri and Mibambwe kings were allowed to take part in military expeditions. (Kagame, 1952, p.59). So, Cyirima Rujugira, though not necessarily a warrior, was a strong strategist, as the above decisions and implementations suggest. Again, it is during the reign of Rwoyera that the kingdom of Gisaka was definitely conquered and annexed by Rwanda. Here again the vision of the Mutara kings as kings of cattle was nuanced in that this very Mutara was able to conquer the long time coveted territory.

Most importantly, each and every king created one or many militias during his reign that were added to the previous militias established by his predecessors. (Kagame, 1963, p.10). This principle did not put an exception on Mutara, Cyirima and Yuhi kings because they were not war or conquest kings. This shows to what extent pre-colonial leaders had a high sense of pragmatism or political realism. Indeed, each king was supposed keep alive the conquering vision.

2. Unifying vision

Many clans happen to have been incorporated in organs of power and they remained within those positions for centuries. Key to this feature was the adoption and implementation of the principle of hereditary political positions. Some keepers of power were getting dismissed (*kunyagwa*) but their successors would keep positions. For example, in the Abiru college, we find following clans and lineages: *Abatsobe, umwiru wa Nyamweru, Abatege, Abaheka, Abakobwa, Abatandura, Abenemuhinda, Abakuna, etc.*

Another unifying feature is that several clans intervened in the rituals of Ubwiru to make the rituals more 'national'. Indeed, the reading of *inzira y'umuriro, inzira y'umuganura,*

inzira y'ishora and *inzira y'ubwimika* indicates that many geographical places, many people of different clans or lineages appear or play a role in a ritual. Men and women of all ages also are represented in rituals. In particular, the annual *Umuganura* ritual unified the peasants around the King (Newbury, 1981, p.89-101).

Moreover, rituals were performed at different times or months of the year. The year had many celebrations or rituals that animated, regulated and kept busy the public life. Throughout the year, these rituals became like national events that gave to Rwandans occasions to meet regularly and share perceptions, beliefs and practices.

Even among the dynastic poets, we see this incorporation of members taken from several clans or lineages: *Abanyiginya*, *Abasinga*, *Ababanda*, *Abene-Nyamurorwa* (or *Abanukamishyo*), and other poets from unknown clans and lineages (Muzungu, 2013). The fact that these different clans and lineages hold positions of power within the kingdom of Rwanda is not haphazard. Indeed, they had taken part in the expansion of Rwanda, in the building of social and political institutions of Rwanda, and even in the enrichment of cultural aspects of Rwanda (Ogot, 1984, pp.516-51; Mbonimana, 2011, p.85-108). Same territory created consciousness about unity among these clans. Moreover, a shared culture among them strengthened a cultural unity.

The Rwandan political ideology was also characterized by power sharing. And power sharing operated in the same line with the unifying vision. To begin with, just as the Rwandan kingdom evolved from a small territory of five political entities (Buganza, Bwanacyambwe, Buriza, Busarasi and Bumbogo) to become the Rwanda of Kigeri IV Rwabugiri, so did the idea of royalty. It is likely that before the king Kigeri I Mukobanya the royal ideology was not yet solid. But since this king, it is mentioned that the process of centralisation of the state led progressively to the advent of the idea of nation, at least for a big part of Rwanda (Lugan, 1997, p.17).

The monarchy was led by the *Nyiginya* dynasty. It is this dynasty together with other clans that progressively increased the size of the Rwandan territory through conquest and assimilation. But the royalty was embodied in the dynastic drum (*Rwoga* and then *Karinga*). The King was its servant, just as were *Abiru*. In this regard, some authors have argued that it was the royalty that was sacred rather than the King as a person, for he lived amongst members of his court Mbonimana, 2001, pp.9-10). At best, in Rwanda, it was the dynastic drum that was sacred (Mbonimana, 2001, pp.9-10; Gravel, 1968, p.23). But the King was also the supreme chief of the army and of the administration (Kagame, 1952, p.116; Vansina, 2001, p.55).

The royal ideology presents the King as a supernatural creature, linking Rwandans to God; sometimes the King bears the name *Imana* (God). That is why it was said that once King, the heir ceased to be a Tutsi and to his ordinary name was added the name of reign. It was believed that the King was neither a Tutsi, nor a Hutu, nor a Twa. He was the King of all.

Although it was believed that theoretically the power of the King was absolute, above all because the ideology presented him as the ‘representative of God in Rwanda’, it has been made clear that in practice, the monarch did not enjoy absolute power. Indeed, the royal hierarchy superposed to the King a permanent queen mother with whom he shared power. The queen mother was chosen by the ritualists among the clans named *Ibibanda* “matridynastic clans: *Abasinga, Abakono, Abega, Abaha, Abazigaba* and *Abagesera* (Bourgeois, 1954, p.52; D’Hrtefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.512). It is worth mentioning that her power was not negligible. Besides, there was the ‘religious’ and political power of *Abiru*. The king’s power was therefore to some extent limited (Kanyamacumbi, 1995, p.238; Gravel, P.B. 1965, p.323; D’Hertefelt, al., 1962, pp.70-71). It was also shared among many other organs that had members coming from different clans and families. Therefore, Vansina is right to say that the Rwandan king was not an autocrat who would rule alone (Vansina, 2001, p.111-117).

The royal ideology contains also the unifying vision in term of peace, prosperity and attitude. The *ishora* ritual expressed that ideology in wishing plant seed, milk, sorghum beer and hydromel, peace, kindness and sharpness to all Rwandans including the king, all men and all women. It wished peace also to all drums and cattle of Rwanda (D’Hertefeldt, 1964, p.115, p, 116-117). It is important to note that all wishes were addressed not only to men, but also and always to women. That ritual aimed at renewing a dynastic cycle. For that reason we find many wishes for the following cycle. Through the wishes, it is possible to see the vision of the Rwandan court during the next period. The *Umuganura* ritual aimed, in particular, at increasing the agricultural production of sorghum. This ritual was also very crucial in political vision, given the fact that the ritual revealed the kingdom unity and the solidarity among Rwandan people. In addition, each year, the ritual defined who was belonging or not to the kingdom of Rwanda (Vansina, 2001, p, 77).

3. Military ideology

The practice of kings of creating a militia at their advent to be added to the existing ones led to the increase of military recruits. This shows some kind of military vision for reaching a bigger size of military recruits in future. But most importantly, the ideological part of military activities reveals to what extent the military vision was elaborated. Through the *ibyvugo* and the *inzira z’ubwiru* we get a grasp of this ideology. The *ibyvugo* trace psychological mobilization at individual and social levels. They also place military exploit at the top of the ideals of *ingabo* (Kagame, 1969, p.15-88). In dynastic poetry, the King is presented as the most powerful warrior. Sometimes he is compared with the thunder such as the King Mazimpaka. The latter has been considered as the thunder when he defeated the Burundian King Ntare. A poet celebrated the event in his poem in following terms: “The day when the thunder defeated the lion.”(Kagame, 1951, p.137).

Besides, naming male children followed sometimes military exploits. For example: *Nshozamihigo, Rugamba, Mutiganda, Ntaganda, Rudahunga, Mulindabyuma, Mutabazi,*

Mukotanyi, Makuza, etc. This practice may have played both a psychological role (self-fulfilling mission), but also an educative role (socialization).

The *Ubwiru* rituals also elevate the king at the level of a great conqueror of other kingdoms. The ritual of enthronement, *inzira y'ubwimika*, socializes, obliges and instills the new king to be an extraordinary warrior. He is young, so the Abiru, through this ritual, are trying to instill in him all these ideals. Let us consider some excerpts:

Inzira y'ubwimika

“Umwene nyabirungu mukuru agasenga

Ngo gahorane imana Kadaho

Tuje kudaha imigisha y'abandi bami

Tujekudaha ingoma z'abandi bami

Tuje kudaha imvura y'abandi bami

Tuje kudaha inka z'abandi bami

Tujekudaha imbuto z'abandi bami.”(D'Hertefelt&Coupez, 1964, p.248

“Ngo uwo ni umuribata

Twaribata u Burundi

Twaribata Ubunyabungo

N'andi mahanga yose

Adatura umwami w'u Rwanda. »D'Hertefelt& Coupez, 1964, p.258, p.260)

That vision is also present in all war rituals where the Rwandan King must conduct operations against other kingdoms and defeat them (D'Hertefelt&Coupez, 1964, p.155-197). We would like to focus on the ritual of the “drum refurbishing”, *kwambika ingoma*. When a king was killed officially by Rwandan warriors, he was castrated and the drum *Karinga* was dressed with his sexual spoils. The operation aimed at increasing the military strength of the king and the country in general (D'Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.155). The ritual text reads as follows:

Iyo ingoma yambara When the drum is dressing

Umuhinza aba yapfuye It means that a rebel has died (D'Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.170)

The term *Umuhinza* was supposed to designate the so-called Hutu kinglets governing the Rwandan space before the Tutsi arrival in Rwanda. That belief led the politician Gitera who was opposing to monarchy and Tutsi in general in late colonial period to complain that Karinga was decorated with the Hutu spoils and therefore Karinga embodied the Hutu defeat. For him the Karinga drum symbolized the domination of Tutsi over Hutu (Semujanga, 2010, p.56-57).

When one reads the ritual, he/she does not find anywhere the term “Hutu”, but the victim was every King who did not recognize the Nyiginya King's power. All excerpts of the text associate every time the *Umuhinza* with a foreign country, not a Hutu. In the ritual, the Burundi kingdom is cited at least five times as the Rwandan enemy. It is worth noting that Minyaruko who has curved the drum Karinga at the advent of Ruganzu Ndori is considered as Hutu (Coupez & Kamanzi, 1962, p.280-281; D'Hertefelt, Coupez, 1964, p.481; Kagame, 1972, p.101-116). Gitera was inspired probably by Kagame who has suggested that the Nyiginya court did not consider at the same level the defeated Tutsi Kings and the defeated Hutu kings, as D'Hertefelt wrote, citing *Inganji Karinga*, Kagame's book (D'Hertefelt, 1971, p.32). D'Hertefelt has reacted against Kagame arguing that the ritual did not mention the absolute difference between Hutu and Tutsi (D'Hertefelt, 1971, p.33). We can conclude that the absolute differentiation between Hutu and Tutsi in pre-colonial period is the projection of the colonial racial ideology applied to Rwandan society since the end of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

The mission of Rwandan kings as formulated by Mutara I Semugeshi stresses in clear and open terms the political vision or philosophy of Rwanda viewed in the lenses of its kings. On the other hand, how power was defined, managed, and shared among several clans of

Rwanda shows implicitly the implementation of that political philosophy. The political vision of pre-colonial Rwanda was shaped around the ideals of having a bigger Rwanda, a more powerful Rwanda militarily, a more populated Rwanda, a more prosperous Rwanda, and a more unified Rwanda. The means used to reach these wide visions include the setting up of administrative and institutional mechanisms and regular reforms of those mechanisms, military affairs but also religious or ritual performances.

How political and military ideals were popularized and socialized through rituals and literary genres (*inzira z'ubwiru, ibisigo, imigani, ibyivugo*) and public performances or celebrations (*ibitaramo*), suggests a constant need for pre-colonial Rwandan leaders to have these visions and philosophies shared among all Rwandans and spread to next generations. This point is also emphasized by Mbonimana: “Rwanda’s political system and ideology were built on four pillars, namely a monarchy conceived in terms of a theocracy, a two-headed monarchy (King and Queen Mother), and a policy of territorial aggrandizement, conquest and patriotism, all of which were inculcated constantly to the people, especially through literary institutions.”(Mbonimana, 2011, p.109)

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