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Proverbs of an expression of socio-cultural values : the case of Kirundi proverbs related to cattle

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

PROVERBS AS AN EXPRESSION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES : THE CASE OF KIRUNDI PROVERBS RELATED TO CATTLE

by

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Bujumbura, April 2003

Dedication

To you beloved parents, for your love and care ;
To you dear sisters and brothers, for your agreable company ;
To you friends and relatives who care about me,
To you cherished husband and our little daughter Laure Bercy,
for all what you mean to me;

These lines are warmly dedicated.

Florence NKURUNZIZA

Dedication

To my late parents,
your departure has been too early,
To my brothers and sisters,
To Evode and his wife Jacqueline,
you have respectively been more
than a brother and sister-in-law,
To my dear husband Charles and our
first born Giorgio Jardel,
for what you mean to me,

I warmly dedicate these pages.

Marie Goretti NZOSABA

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CHAPTER I : THE PROBLEM

1.0. Introduction

A knowledge of what has been termed 'oral literature' holds a strong indigenous literary tradition. It is very developed in Burundi and comprises proverbs, tales, stories, songs, riddles and praise poems. In a community of non literate people like the Burundian one, this oral literature reflects many aspects of culture. This research study then discusses the role of one of its elements, proverbs expressing socio–cultural values.

In fact, Kirundi proverbs refer to many and various things, and to phenomena as well. We cannot pretend to study all Kirundi proverbs as they refer to many things .

As far as our study is concerned, we are dealing with Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. We have been interested in cattle thanks to previous researchers who suggested such a study. Cattle is greatly referred to in Kirundi oral literature. So, the study of proverbs can be made on those related to it. It is highly valued in Burundi, what lets us hope that proverbs referring to it can express socio–cultural values of this community .

1 .1. Background to the problem

Working on proverbs as in the present study is working on language itself. The subject under study calls for a research in a complex area which seeks to demonstrate the relationship between language and culture in the Burundian society. This relationship has fascinated and continues to fascinate many researchers. There must be a kind of relationship between different aspects of a given language and the ways in which the speakers of that language experience and view the world. The real problem is then deciding the evident nature of that relationship and finding ways to demonstrate it.

The present work is concerned with providing evidence for the relationship between language and the Burundian culture. It demonstrates how proverbs reflect socio – cultural values in Burundian society. In this work , we join Ronald, W. (1986 : 215) who states :

> « ***Language provides a screen or filter to reality, it determines how speakers percieve and organize the world around them, both the natural world and the social world. Consequently, the language you speak helps to form your world view ».***

Proverbs are one of the elements of oral literature in Burundian society. They are likely to express some aspects of Rundi culture, precisely socio–cultural values. In this sense, Nkurunziza (1986 : iii) asserts that :

« Rundi culture is widely expressed through oral literature for in Burundi we have almost exclusively oral tradition ».

1.2. Statement of the problem

The language we speak is part of our social inheritance from the ancestors. It holds within itself many socio–cultural values that can characterise the society of the users. Proverbs are then one of the elements of language which is greatly used in everyday conversations between people and elsewhere. These proverbs are usually taken as mere literary products and are neglected at the level of the cultural message they convey.

In Burundian culture, proverbs play a great role in education. They convey moral lessons and hold a number of cultural values. Unfortunately, the importance attached to these sayings is rapidly disappearing. The younger generation ignores the value of proverbs as culture store and instructive sayings.

Many researchers who were interested in proverbs mostly led their investigations into the fields of semantics, pragmatics, but very few in sociolinguistics. That is why we found it interesting to study proverbs as an aspect of Kirundi language which can reflect Burundian cultural values.

1.3. Aims of the study

The present work is an attempt to make a contribution in providing evidence for the cultural message got through language. The main target we want to reach is showing how proverbs related to cattle convey socio–cultural values in Burundian society.

We also intend to arouse the interest of the younger generation in proverbs as instructive part of language. It is also an attempt to provide foundation for scholars in their investigations of the Kirundi language as expressing Burundian culture.

Therefore, the work aims at showing that proverbs like any other literary genre reflect the type of society that has produced them. It shows how language refers to things or phenomena in the environment of the users to determine the society's views.

1.4. Motivation

The language spoken in a given society holds within itself linguistic aspects of adaptation to environment, social values and beliefs which are elements of a whole culture. We felt a great interest in exploring our own culture. We thought of oral tradition and particularly proverbs as being rich in cultural values we seek to explore.

Furthermore, the choice of this field was also influenced by the evident existence of a close relationship between language and culture, and the necessity to demonstrate it. We found it interesting to rely on proverbs as one of Kirundi language elements and study them in this sense. Again, proverbs related to cattle are more interesting as we want to study the relationship between language and culture in a pastoral society. It is motivating to find a few Kirundi proverbs related to cattle which means a lot in Burundian culture. We want to find socio – cultural values which are expressed through proverbs. We also want to describe in what way they are expressed i.e on the basis of symbols referring to cattle.

The symbols are to be interpreted by integrating them in Burundian cultural system.

1.5. Scope and delimitation of the study

The strong wish to show the relationship between language and culture would lead to a broad area of research if it is not limited. So, for the purpose of making the study easier to follow, we took some Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. We will show how they express socio–cultural values. Again, it would be quite impossible to study all Kirundi proverbs because they refer to many aspects. That is why we had to choose one of these referents, cattle.

CHAPTER II : REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2. 0. Introduction

The present work relied on some theoretical notions. We had to point out different definitions of the key terms met in our topic. We also had to show the theories which guided us in the analysis we undertook. A short discussion on proverbs was also necessary to show its useful definitions and its different aspects relevant to our analysis. Finally, as this study was culture - centered, we operated in the domain of sociolinguistics.

2.1. Definitions of key terms

2 .1 .1 . Definition of society

A great number of researchers attempted to explain what 'Society' is, but it is not easy to find a common agreement on its definition.

In fact, we cannot determine how big a society must be and what should be its constituents. It may be understood as a nation or as a group of individuals having common interest and/or organization. In Webster's New World Dictionary (1962), 'Society' is defined as :

> ***« People living together as a group or forming a group with the same way of life ».***

As for the Webster's Ninth New collegiate Dictionary (1987), 'Society' is :

> ***« A community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions and collective activities ».***

From the two definitions above, we understand that a 'society' may be a nation or a group of people with no determined size. In this sense, a nation may hold groups of people which themselves can be considered as societies. Therefore, we assume that a person may belong to more than one society at the same time.

Considering Hunt (1962 : 40), he brings in a new characteristic of society which is organization. He assumes that to form a society, a group must be bound together by established relationships, it must be well organized. Then, he defines 'Society' as follows :

> ***« A society is a group of people who have lived together long enough to get themselves organized and to think of themselves as a social unit ».***

In our research study, we are interested in the society defined as a nation in which we find people having the commom traditions.

The society of our subject is Burundi, and it is a pastoral one since its traditions are mainly based on cattle. In this assumption, we join Gashikanyi (1986 : 9) who says :

> ***« Proverbs are concerned with things in the natural environment. That is why this pastoral society has many proverbs related to cattle. On a longer scale, the frequent reference to the animal world suggests the type of environment. Proverbs tell a lot about culture and experiences of society ».***

In this view, Gashikanyi shows the reflection of Burundian culture through Kirundi proverbs. He sees Burundi as a pastoral society and he assumes that the symbols used in proverbs can reflect the type of environment. As for our topic, cattle is referred to in Kirundi proverbs. Our research seeks to analyse these proverbs and discover some Burundian cultural values which are reflected.

2.1.2. Definition of culture

Defining culture is very challenging. This term is used differently by many anthropologists, but they all relate it to community. Culture is distinct from one society to another. Goodenough (1957) quoted in Wardhaugh (1986 : 211) defines culture as a socially acquired knowledge. He says :

> ***« A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its***

members and to do so in any role that they accept for anyone of themselves ».

In the same view, Malinowski's own definition quoted in Ayisi (1979 :1) reads as follows :

« Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, laws, moral customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society ».

From the two definitions, culture is understood in the sense of whatever one has to know in order to operate in his society. It is clear that a whole culture is made of many different elements among which are values. Cultural values help the members of a society to operate in an acceptable manner .

In Webster's New World Dictionary (1962), Culture is defined as :

« The ideas, skills, arts,tools,and the way of life of a certain people in a certain time ».

In sum, 'Culture' is very complex and it can be defined in many ways. As far as our study is concerned, what is to be retained from all these assumptions is that culture is that complex way of life specific to a given society. From this complex way of life, we are concerned with cultural values which may be expressed through Kirundi proverbs related to cattle .

2.1.3. Definition of values

'Values ' is a term which seems to be easily understood but its meaning is proved to be confusing. It can be taken as the monetary worth or importance attributed to objects. This is shown in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1987) which defines 'value' as :

> ***« A fair return or equivalent in goods, services, or money for something exchanged. »***

In the same dictionary, this term can stand for a principle or quality estimated in a given society. It is grasped in the economic or moral sense. In our research study, we are interested in this moral sense of values. It is also shown in Webster's New World Dictionary (1962), where 'values'are defined as beliefs or ideals, the moral values of a nation.

This definition shows that there are certain beliefs in a given society in which one can see what the people of that society consider as ideal. The ideals may be qualities or things which are desirable and highly regarded in the society. In the same respect, Hunt (1962 :44) defines social 'values' as follows :

> ***« Social values are those things which in a given society are thought to be desirable because they contribute to the good life and the general welfare ».***

As far as our research study is concerned, this definition is helpful in the sense that the cultural values we seek to explore can be understood in this way.

These are things or qualities that are required for each member of the society for his good life.

The Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986) defines 'value' as :

> ***« Something as a principle, quality or entity intrinsically valuable or desirable ».***

In sum, the definitions of 'values' already mentioned read alike. They share the same view that 'values' are principles, qualities or ideals that characterize a society.

The concern of our research is with Burundian cultural values expressed in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. We have to show what things or qualities are mostly desirable in Burundian society. These are meant when referring to cattle in proverbs.

2.1.4.The meaning of cattle in Burundi

Cattle is raised in many societies but the way it is valued differs from one society to another. In Burundian community, cattle means a lot and we can even admit that this society is a pastoral one.

In fact, not only cattle is highly regarded in the economic sense but also holds a considerable place in social life. In this sense, Ndihokubwayo (1999 : 44) says :

> ***« In the Burundian culture, cows were also thought to stand for one's wealth. Cows used to play a number of function. Cows were offered from one person (family) to another so as to consolidate their relationships. This was part of a cow social life. Cows were also offered for dowry and also produced milk whose functions were unlimited ».***

In this view, she emphasizes the role of cows in traditional Burundian society. According to her, a cow played a great number of roles and it was the central element of cattle. In the same respect, Nkurunziza (1986 :50-51) states :

> ***« It has been pointed that in former times, the cow in Burundi was praised by cattle – raisers for it had many advantages. Cattle has a great importance not only in the economic sense, but also in the socio-political mentality of Barundi people. The economic structures and the cultural values in Burundi were mainly based on the cow ».***

From these views, we notice that cattle, especially cow, was the basic element on which economy and social life were based in traditional Burundi.

Therefore, the main target of the present work is to find out socio- cultural values expressed in proverbs related to cattle. The symbols used in these proverbs are mainly elements and products of cattle. These are to be interpreted

in relation to this pastoral society and its cultural system. As symbols stand for abstract ideas, we need to look at their cultural meanings and find out what they symbolize as cultural values.

2.2.Theories on the analysis of symbols

2.2.1. Definition and nature of symbol

The term 'symbol' is essentially an indirect expression of something invisible or abstract idea, by a concrete object. However, this term seems to be polysemic. It is shown in the famous Universal Dictionary of Trévoux quoted in Ortigues (1962 : 29), which defines a symbol as follows :

> ***« Symbole : signe, espèce d'emblème ou représentation de quelque chose morale par les images,ou les représentations des choses naturelles ».***

Translation :

> ***« Symbol : sign, kind of emblem or representation of something moral by images, or representations of things which are natural ».***

As for Bauman (1992 : 101), he defines a symbol in these terms :

> ***« A symbol is a concrete or familiar object that is used in reference to or an explanation of an abstract idea, or a less familiar object or event. It is a particularly useful means of conveying***

certain important truths or lessons about human life and the problem of existence ».

Symbols are often used in wisdom literature as riddles and proverbs. As far as the present study is concerned, we need to interpret symbols which are used in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. They are considered as a useful means of conveying truths or lessons, and we need to discover Burundian cultural values reflected in these proverbs. These values are abstract ideas meant when referring to cattle in proverbs .

According to Alleau (1977 : 45), a symbol can be understood as follows :

« L'on s'est servi du mot symbole pour désigner le signe linguistique ou plus exactement ce que nous appelons le signifiant ».

Translation : ***« The word 'symbol' has been used to designate the linguistic sign or more exactly what we call signifier ».***

2.2.2. Structuralist theory of symbol

The present work attempts a direct interpretation of symbols used in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. This interpretation has to do then with cultural beliefs and considerations. In this sense, we are likely to apply the structuralist analysis suggested by Ortigues (1962 :201). He says :

> ***« La théorie de la fonction symbolique n'est autre autre chose que la méthode d'analyse structurale prise dans toute son extension, en admettant le postulat que le fait sociologique (dans ses éléments formels, normatifs) soit homologue au fait linguistique ».***

Translation :

> ***« The theory of symbolic function is nothing but the method of structural analysis taken in its extension, postulating that the sociological fact (in its formal, normative elements) is homologous to the linguistic fact ».***

The theory is understood in the sense that any human reality has as catalyst the way to talk i.e there is a tendency to see the reality in a symbolic manner within a given cultural universe. Moreover, this structural analysis holds that there is a production of equivalences to formal structures of a given society in material contents. In this sense, things are referred to to determine abstract ideas. In our research study, cultural values are expressed on the basis of symbols which are to be interpreted regarding their sociological place.

In the same respect, Alleau (1977 :51) also suggests the structuralist interpretation of symbols. He argues that :

> ***« La conception anthropologique structuraliste des symboles assimile ces signes et leurs associations diverses à un***

langage socio–culturel et en somme les situe dans l'univers du discours ».

Translation : ***« The structuralist anthropological conception of symbols assimilates those signs and their varied associations to a socio –cultural way to talk and in sum, put them in the universe of speech ».***

Here again, the structuralist method of interpreting symbols suggests that we have to relate those linguistic signs to a socio–cultural symbolic system. In this way , we join Levi Strauss's conception of symbols i.e their interpretation quoted in Alleau (1977 : 45) which reads as follows :

« Pour interpréter un symbole, il suffirait de le décoder et de l'intégrer aux 'systèmes' symboliques d'une culture déterminée ».

Translation : ***« In order to interpret a symbol, it would be sufficient to decode it and integrate it in the symbolic systems of a determined culture ».***

In sum, the structuralist method of analysing symbols is a theory which can be applied to the present study. We need to interpret symbols which are used in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. Those symbols are analysed in terms of abstract ideas signified. There is a kind of conventional relation between the symbol and what it stands for as abstract idea, and this is helpful in the interpretation.

2.2.3. Linguistic determinism theory

'Linguistic determinism' is a theory of language suggested by Yule (1985) and which proposes a deterministic relation between language and world view. As we are concerned with cultural message i.e values conveyed through proverbs, this theory can be applied.

In fact, the interpretation of proverbs as means of expressing cultural values is part of the analysis of the relationship between language and culture. We can then follow this theory of 'linguistic determinism' since it is suggested as the quite influential in this connection. Yule (1985 : 196) who suggests it assumes that :

> ***« In the sense that language reflects culture, this is a very important observation and the existence of different world views should be ignored when different languages or language varieties are studied. However, one quite influential theory of the connection between language and world view proposes a much more deterministic relationship ».***

He goes on saying that :

> ***« The way your language is organized will determine how you perceive the world being organized i.e your language will give you a ready made system of categorizing what you***

> ***perceive and as a consequence, you will be led to perceive the world around you only in those categories. Stated in this way, you have a theory of language which has been called 'Linguistic determinism' and which in its strongest version holds that'language determines thought' ».***

From this theory, we understand that language determines the way the speakers think. As far as our topic is concerned, the symbolic system used in the construction of proverbs reveals the way the producers of those proverbs think. It reveals what they value, what they think is standard and how the world around them should be. Therefore, following this theory, we are likely to interpret symbols referring to cattle as reflecting cultural values in Burundian cultural way of thinking.

2.3. The concept of proverb

2.3.1. Definitions

Proverbs are found in many societies, especially in those of oral tradition. This concept has been defined differently but the full definition is still unknown. Since there are many definitions of 'proverb', we can just mention some of them. In Chambers Universal Learner's Dictionary (1980) proverb is defined as 'a well known saying that gives good advice or expresses a supposed truth'. From this view, a proverb is characterized by truthfulness and popularity. It is recognized by the members of the society which has produced it. It expresses what is considered as evident in that society, and it is used to advise.

Dzobo, quoted in Sindayikengera (1997 :21) defines proverbs as follows :

> ***« Proverbs are short meaningful statements about all aspects of life, its successes and failures and its trials and sufferings. They create in us the desire to discover what life does mean in this earthy existence as they express : long experiences in short sentence. They deal with everyday living, business dealings, family relations, vice and virtue, poverty and richness, joy and sorrow ».***

The description above shows the shortness of a proverb and its functional aspect. We understand that proverbs express what people think life is, what their aspirations and ideals are. As they deal with everyday life, we are likely to find in these statements the principles or values of a given society. They are a collection of its people's experiences.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1982), proverb is said to be :

> ***« A short pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a well known truth or fact. One that is recognized as a typical example ».***

When analysing the two preceding definitions of 'proverb', we realize that the aspects of shortness, truthfulness and popularity are emphasized as the main characteristics of a proverb.

However, even if there is a common agreement on what characterizes a proverb as seen in the above definitions, it is not the view of all people. There are some who find it impossible to define 'proverb' because of many factors which gather to form it.

In short, we can say that defining ' proverb' is not an easy matter. All the attempts made to define it encounter its complexity. So, they failed to provide the reader with a full and complete definition.

As far as we are concerned, expecting to come up with a full definition would not be certain. We can consider certain aspects of a proverb, which would be helpful in the present study. Here, we mean the use of symbols and the functional aspect of proverbs as they are loaded with cultural messages.

2.3.2. Linguistic aspect of proverbs

Whatever the orientation of the study on proverbs is, the researcher should not ignore that there are certain linguistic features asssociated with them. These are especially metaphor, humour, sharp wit, aesthetic and poetic value of language use. In the same respect, Okpewho (1992 : 236) also presents proverbs as having many linguistic features among which is the economy of expression. He says :

« In terms of form or structure, we find that proverbs could also be examined from a

> ***number of perspectives. No doubt the most widely acknowledged stylistic quality of the proverb is its economy of expression ».***

In this assumption, economy of expression indicates that one statement as a proverb captures a large situation or an experience. This large situation is presented in a brief metaphorical way. So, the proverb says what would have taken many more words to say in direct language. In this sense, Okpewho (1992) goes on arguing that :

> ***« Linked with this brevity or economy is the metaphorical quality of proverbs. It is sometimes referred to as a figurative or symbolic quality. However, whatever name we give it, we simply mean that in a proverb, one set of images (or items) describing a situation or experience is frequently used for reflecting another situation or experience ».***

We can say that proverbs are intended to carry messages about the world or human conditions. They are frequently expressed or framed with symbols taken from the world of animals, plants or many other things in the natural world.

Furthermore, regarding how proverbs are constructed, and what they are used for, they have a variety of relations to other genres of folk literature. In the same way, Bauman (1992 :129) argues that :

> ***« In folk literature, proverbs may be linked to various narrative forms, both as narrative spring boards and conclusion to which the narrative leads. They may also summarize a narrative, appear in close proximity to it or become a point of reference ».***

2.3.3. The role of proverbs

In many societies, literature is produced to express the people's way of life and thinking. For those whose literature is mainly oral, we recognize proverbs as part of it . This part of oral tradition functions as the vehicle of useful wisdom and moral lessons. They may also be used to stress a specific coloring and identity of a people. In this sense, Nkeshimana (1989 : 3) says :

> ***« C'est dans ses récits mythiques et historiques, dans ses grandes poésies, dans ses prescriptions, ses taboos et ses interdits, dans ses contes et ses fables, dans ses proverbes , ses devinettes, ses chansons que se reflète comme réfléchie dans un miroir l'âme d'un peuple ».***

Translation:

> ***« It is in its mythical and historical narrations, in its great poetry, in its prescriptions, its taboos and interdicts, in its tales and its fables, in its proverbs, its***

> ***riddles, its songs that is reflected as thoughtful the mind of a people ».***

As for Sindayikengera (1997 : 31), he assumes that :

> ***« Proverbs reveal what people adore and what people's outlook on life is, and will provide a student of human nature with a look into the character of a people ».***

He adds that 'the goal of proverbs is to convey cultural values, to instruct, to correct, etc.' In these assumptions, we notice that Nkeshimana (1989) and Sindayikengera (1997) share our view on the role of proverbs. Okpewho (1992 : 23) also recognizes this role of proverbs and his assumption reads as follows :

> ***« A third and no doubt overriding value of proverbs is that they may be considered the storehouse of the wisdom of the society. Most proverbs have a philosophical depth which is the result of a careful and sensitive observation of human conduct and experience of the surrounding nature ».***

Following this view, we notice that proverbs can be used in legal disputes or meetings for example. In such circumstances, proverbs are treated with authority and respect because people consider them as true and convincing. So, they are often used for resolving conflicts and other problems which arise between citizens.

In conclusion, proverbs can be considered the most useful literary genre to convey cultural messages. They often enhance and summarize the wisdom of collective experience.

2.3.4. Studies on Kirundi proverbs

In order to make the present study easier to follow, we examined different studies already made on Kirundi proverbs. These would be helpful in the sense that they reveal to us what is already achieved and what still needs to be investigated on.

The researchers who have been considered comprise foreigners and Barundi students. The foreigners such as Rodegem (1983) and Zuure (1932) did not deepen their studies. They concentrated on listing Kirundi proverbs in alphabetical order and giving their explanations and / or their corresponding proverbs in French.

Concerning Barundi students who carried out their research studies on proverbs, they were mostly interested in the domain of Pragmatics and Semantics. In Pragmatics, we can mention as an illustration Murekambanze (1989), Sindayikengera (1997), to name but a few. They attempted to study Kirundi proverbs in their context of utterance.

So far, there are not many studies on proverbs which are culture – centered. It is also necessary to analyse these statements at their cultural level. In this sense, Harerimana (1998 :44) claims that :

> ***« Indeed, if the pragmatic analysis is the speaker's goal centered, there must also be a sociolinguistic analysis and the latter is a culture-centered study ».***

From this point of view, we understand that pragmatic analysis is not enough. There are other fields in which proverbs can be studied, namely Sociolinguistics. As far as the present research is concerned, we will analyse Kirundi proverbs related to cattle, taking into account the Burundian society. This research seeks to show what Kirundi proverbs related to cattle express as cultural values. It is then in the domain of sociolinguistics since the analysis is culture and society – centered.

2.3.5. Sociolinguistic analysis

The area of 'proverbs' is a vast one and inspires many researchers. Many of them were interested in other fields rather than in sociolinguistics. As our research is culture–centered, we are operating in this field.

What is Sociolinguistics ?

Kirsten Malmkjaer (1991 : 415) defines 'sociolinguistics' as follows :

> ***« Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society, and it draws on insights from Sociology as well as insights from other areas of Linguistic study ».***

The present work is concerned with depicting the relationship between language and culture. In our hypothesis, we assume that culture is reflected

through language. We are studying Kirundi language in relation to Burundian society. This research study can then be considered as a sociolinguistic one.

In his attempt to make an introduction to Sociolinguistics, Wardhaugh (1986 :212) claims that :

> ***« The culture of a people finds reflection in the language they employ : because they value certain things and do them in a certain way they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do ».***

This view accords well with our research hypothesis which supposes a reflection of culture through language ; and particularly proverbs as far as the topic is concerned. This is to be illustrated in the present work where Burundian socio – cultural values are assumed to be expressed in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle.

In fact, the study of Kirundi language and the whole culture would be too broad. That is why we limited our research on Kirundi proverbs related to cattle and cultural values they convey. In our study, a sociolinguistic analysis is useful in arriving at the meanings of symbols used in proverbs. We have to know what they stand for. The analysis takes into account Burundian society whose symbolic system confers meanings to elements and products of cattle.

According to Ndihokubwayo (1999 : 13), human life is mirrored in language. She assumes that:

> ***« If language is central to man, it is not surprising to find so much of human life mirrored in language. Not only do we give names to things, but our language comes to symbolize our social values ».***

In sum, we can admit that language and culture are intimately related. As proverbs are part of language, they can be studied in the domain of Sociolinguistics. This can help to provide evidence for that relationship between language and culture. It is the primary concern of the present work to analyse Kirundi proverbs related to cattle and show how the latter is referred to to symbolize Burundian cultural values.

CHAPTER III : METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

Any scientific study should be based on both data and theory. In order to carry out a good research, the researcher must follow an appropriate methodology for collecting and analysing the data.

This chapter describes the source of the data. It also shows the procedures used in data collection and data analysis. The researcher may also encounter problems during the study and these problems should be mentioned.

3.1. Data collection procedure

When collecting data, a researcher may use one or a combination of more than one procedure. For the present study, we used written materials gathered from books. We found a great number of proverbs related to cattle and we chose to rely on those books as the main source of our data.

In fact, Kirundi proverbs related to cattle were collected from different anthropologists who studied Kirundi language and culture. These anthropologists are Rodegem, F.M & Bapfutwabo, J. (1961). Sagesse Kirundi : Proverbes, Dictons, Locutions Usités au Burundi ; Rodegem, F.M (1983). Paroles de Sagesse au Burundi and Zuure, B. (1932). L'Ame du Murundi. We have been interested in these anthropologists because they have studied Kirundi language in general and proverbs in particular.

In collecting the data, we selected thirty eight (38) proverbs related to cattle. Some of them refer to cows in general while others refer to different

elements making cattle such as bulls and mother cows . We also collected proverbs referring to such product of cows as milk. Only proverbs related to cattle were collected from many others.

3.2. Data analysis procedure

In the present work, the analysis is based on the theories discussed earlier. These are the structuralist theory of symbols and linguistic determinism. We analyse the terms used as symbols in Kirundi proverbs related to cattle and see what they stand for as cultural values in Burundian society.

The first step of our analysis consists of categorizing the proverbs to be analysed according to their referents i.e the symbols themselves and the themes reflected. These referents are elements or products of cattle. Each of these symbols is to be decoded and integrated in Burundian symbolic system to get its cultural meaning. Here we join Sindayikengera (1997) who assumes that'if one fails to identify a referent of a proverb, he fails to find the meaning as well'.

The second step is to interprete the message conveyed through a proverb on the basis of certain theories. Having identified what the symbol stands for, we can easily get the message and find the values which are expressed. We mainly follow the Structuralist theory of symbols and Linguistic determinism theory.

Therefore, the theory of symbol is helpful in the sense that this symbol is associated with a certain meaning in the cultural system. Moreover,'linguistic determinism' also helps us to get the message since it holds that this way of talking, as in the use of symbols, determines what the speaker thinks and his setting.

3.3. Problems encountered

While carrying out the study, we encounter two main problems. In the collection of the data, we found many proverbs which are inaccurately stated. This was due to the fact that some of the anthropologists were not native speakers of Kirundi language. They failed to write correctly Kirundi proverbs and made some mistakes. So, we had to restate them ourselves and some minor errors might have occurred.

In data analysis, translation is a step which is not an easy matter. The fact that there might be some Kirundi words lacking adequate equivalents in English is an obstacle. These items are difficult to translate and we have to use literal translation. In this sense, we are running the risk of distorting the meaning.

CHAPTER IV : DATA ANALYSIS

4.0. Introduction

Literature, whether oral or written, is part of man's productions. It reflects much of his speaker's culture and the conceptions of his society. So, the analysis we undertake is concerned with Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. These proverbs are assumed to express Burundian socio – cultural values on the basis of symbols. The analysis is made in two steps.

The first step is concerned with the classification of proverbs in terms of themes. These are social values expressed in proverbs dealing with cows in general i.e the concept of social prestige and social relationships. There is also the ideal of maternity in Burundi expressed through proverbs dealing with mother cows. Kirundi proverbs also refer to bull to express such values as power and reproductive force. Finally, the values of wealth and happiness experienced by people are expressed through proverbs referring to milk.

In the second step, we follow some linguistic theory to interpret the proverbs. If we refer to Okpewho (1992), proverbs are linked with metaphorical or symbolic quality. The symbols are taken from the world of people, animals and of the physical landscape. The words marked as symbols express in Rundi culture meanings which are not evident by themselves but which are rather symbolic within the society. Therefore, the proverbs under study are interpreted on the basis of Burundian society and its symbolic system. This is the structuralist theory of symbols. Here, we follow Levi Strauss's theory of symbols quoted in Alleau (1977). As we are confronted with symbolic meanings, this level of interpretation requires a knowledge of the society's considerations which help us to interpret the symbols themselves. We also refer

to Yule (1985) whose theory is Linguistic determinism. In our study, Kirundi proverbs determine the way Barundi people think, what they value and what they think life should be.

This chapter presents then the interpretation and findings on the symbols used in proverbs under study. Most of the discussion is centered on the association of symbols met in our corpus and the Burundian socio – cultural values they stand for. We base our study on the theories of symbols which require to integrate those symbols in the cultural systems.

4.1. Classification of data in terms of themes

4.1.1.Social values expressed through proverbs dealing with cows in general

Kirundi proverbs refer to various objects, activities, animals, to name but a few. In the present work, we are concerned with proverbs dealing with cattle and cows in general to start with. Cows are remarkably referred to in Kirundi provebs to express some cultural values.

4.1.1.1.The concept of social prestige

Traditionally in Burundi, cows were highly valued and associated with great respect of the cattle – man. Here, we refer to Harerimana (1998). He says that there was a certain pride in the possession of cows and they conferred social prestige to the possessor. This link of high position and possession of cows is expressed in the following proverb :

1. Uwutakuzi ntakurusha inka.

L.M. He who does not know you does not have more cows than you.

P.M. He who does not know you cannot pretend to be wealthier than you.

In this proverb, cows do not mean the domestic animals but someone's situation, social place or wealth. If we refer to Levi Strauss quoted in Alleau (1977) and if we try to integrate the symbol of cows in Burundian society, they determine people's prestige and respectability. In this sense, the proverb above refers to cows to express someone's prestige and calls for people's attention. We should be careful about unknown individuals because they may deserve much more respect.

In addition, the proverb is somehow assuring for people who do not really deserve respect. In the presence of people whom you do not know, you must be careful. As you ignore their standard of life, they are supposed to be respected and given much more value.

Another proverb to illustrate this value of social prestige is the following :

2. Uwutagira inka ntagira igabo.

L.M. He who does not have cows lacks pride.

P.M. He who is not wealthy becomes humble.

The proverb above states that the possession of cows is linked with one's wealth which is part of social prestige. In Burundian culture, people who do not have many cows are not very respected and their pride is lacking. So, the fact

[1]

[1] L.M. = Literal Meaning
P.M = Proverbial Meaning

that cows confer prestige and respect is clearly shown in the proverb above.

In fact, according to Harerimana (1998) a man is someone who is respected and holds a good position in his society. On the contrary, people who lack manhood have no value. They are underestimated. They are given a low position and this is assimilated to the lack of cows. Therefore, this social value that every member of the society dreams of is symbolized by cows which imply one's self - sufficiency and pride.

As Barundi people assimilate the possession of cows to one's importance and prestige, he who happens to misbehave undergoes the spoliation of his cows. This spoliation on its turn is assimilated to dishonor. It is what is noticed in the proverb :

3. Icaha caha inka

L.M. A mistake picks cows.

P.M. To a mistake committed, dishonor is a consequence.

In this proverb, cows' loss comes to symbolize one's loss of prestige and honor because of his misbehaviour. We have already seen that to possess many cows is the source of prestige in Burundian culture. However, people have to remain responsible in order to keep their honor. Otherwise, if they dare to misbehave, they observe their cows spoliated. One's cows spoliation is the greatest punishment and dishonor itself.

Nevertheless, if in Burundi possessing cows is a great condition to be respected, it is not sufficient in itself. Moral values are also required and they may even overpass the possession of cows. This necessity of morality is expressed in the proverb :

4. Umutima mwiza uruta inka.

L.M. A good heart is better than a cow.

P.M. Good behaviour is more important than wealth.

The key words in this proverb are a good heart and a cow, which are compared in terms of importance. The proverb then gives the great value to one's good behaviour whatever his possessions can be.

As we said earlier, cows in Burundian society are highly valued and even condition the possessor's social place. However, they cannot overpass one's good way of behaving which is the most valuable quality. This reference to cows, which are normally important but overpassed, comes to reflect and insist on the great mportance of moral qualities. In spite of one's possession of cows, he cannot acquire the social prestige if he is not a good man.

4.1.1.2. Social relationships

In Burundian society as elsewhere, people try to establish social relationships among themselves. These relationships make Barundi people interact and exchange things. Mutual obligations and assistance were maintained to make the society a unified one. Let's then see how this is reflected in some Kirundi proverbs related to cows.

For instance, if we consider Nkurunziza (1986),the cultural values were mainly based on cow. They served as the basic unit in Burundian social relationships. Many engagements were made on the basis of cows' exchange. Let's analyse for instance the following proverb :

1. Nyamwanka iyo biva yatutse umwami w'inka.

L.M. He who hates where things come from insulted the cows'King.

P.M. It is no use to quarrel with someone you need.

In Burundian culture, the act of cows' exchanging or cows giving and receiving was very meaningful. If we try to see what the gift of a cow symbolizes, we understand that important relations were established between the grantor and the receiver. Integrated in Burundian cultural system, the gift of a cow shows love and faithfulness between the two individuals. So, in the proverb above, 'umwami w'inka' (cows'king) stands for someone that everybody depends upon and the giver of life. He who happens to offend him is lost because he still needs him. The reference to cows exchanging in this proverb is due to the fact that cows were the basic unit used in social life. As this life is indispensable for all people, none should dare to disturb his relations with those he needs.

Another proverb expressing this maintenance of social relationships is the following :

2. Uwaguhaye inka ni we ayikwaka.

L.M. He who gave you a cow is the one who takes it back.

P. M. An irresponsible man loses his dearest friends.

As already mentioned, the gift of a cow symbolizes close relationship between the grantor and the receiver. So, the established relationship can be maintained or lost, depending on the individuals' faithfulness. When you receive a cow, you expect at the same time confidence and love from the grantor and vice versa. Nevertheless, if one of the two individuals misbehaves and causes disappointment, the relationship may take an end. Therefore, the love and

faithfulness which linked the grantor and the receiver are lost, and the receiver loses the gift as well. If the grantor takes it back, it is a sign of disappointment and rejection of the relationship. The proverb above can then be understood as reflecting this way of establishing social relationship symbolized by cows exchanging. This exchange does not really mean the increasing of the things exchanged, but it is representative of the relations established.

We have seen that there was a strong wish of possessing many cows which characterized Barundi people. However, this strong wish could be harmful in case of exaggeration. People who tried to gain cows dishonestly, ignoring the social norms were likely to lose them . This loss is expressed in the following proverb :

3. Amunguranka niyo mazikesha.

L.M. The great intention of increasing cows decreases them.

P.M. When you have an exceeding greed for gain, it leads you to total loss.

This proverb condemns people who see nothing but their own profits denying the social conformity. It is obvious that everybody dreams of good life and comfort. However, we should be careful and not exaggerate in our trials to get what we need. To increase one's cows in Burundian society was a source of prestige but doing it in bad way was dangerous. He who looked for cows should think about others in the society and be peaceful with them. Otherwise, he could fail to gain them and lose friends at the same time because of his misbehaviour. If cows stand for one's prestige and good position, their loss symbolizes the loss of reputation due to the failure to maintain good relations.

Moreover, the interdependence and social interaction found in the habits of Barundi people is also expressed in this proverb :

4. Kutaja inama kurasisha inka mu jisho.

L.M. Not holding a council makes shoot the cow in the eye.

P.M. People who do not understand one another are likely to fail.

It is in the habits of Barundi people to consult one another in order to make good decisions in many circumstances. Everything one could do had to be approved by the neighbours and the members of the family. They were closely associated and they had to consult one another before doing anything implying social life. In the proverb above,'kurasa inka mu jisho'(to shoot the cow in the eye) is the most harmful act one could make. It was a great sin since we know the place of a cow in Burundian society. So, the proverb above refers to this undesirable act to express the great failure experienced by those who rebel to concertation. Those who thought they were independent were wrong and they were likely to fail in what they did. Many engagements were made in the presence of neighbours and even a guilty man was firstly judged within the family. He who transgressed this rule was rejected by other faithful members of the society.

In conclusion, being the central element of cattle in this pastoral society, cows are a symbol mostly used in Kirundi proverbs to express socio – cultural values. Among others are the concept of social prestige attributed to people and the social relationships they used to establish among themselves.

4.1.2. The ideal of maternity as expressed through proverbs dealing with mother cows

Traditionally in Burundi, maternity was the greatest fortune that a woman could have. It was the great happiness to have many children in a given family. On the contrary, a sterile woman was valueless and could even be

chased from her family in–law for not being able to give birth to children. In this sense, Harerimana (1998) says that a woman becomes a family member when she has given birth to children in her husband's family. This woman's implications as a mother is reflected in some Kirundi proverbs related to mother cows.

The role of women as mothers is particularly valuable in Burundian society. This is shown in the proverb :

1. Ingumba irira ku mvyeyi.

L.M. A sterile cow eats on the mother cow.

P.M. Undeserving people benefit from the deserving ones.

In the proverb above, the symbols of 'imvyeyi'(mother cow) and 'ingumba' (sterile cow) show the place reserved to mothers in Burundi and that of sterile women. Here, we follow Harerimana (1998) who claims that a female cow is associated with ladies and a bull with men. The word 'imvyeyi' means a mother cow but it really stands for human mothers in Burundian symbolic system. Mothers are the most valuable individuals respected for their maternity. They are associated with exceptional qualities such as tenderness and love whereas sterile women are considered as harmful. A sterile woman in Burundi is undesirable and she is in most cases expelled from her family in–law. She deserves nothing but rejection. This general view of fecundity in Burundian culture is then reflected in the above proverb. Only mothers deserve respect and stability, the sterile ones can only profit from them.

In the same sense, let's consider the following proverb:

2. Aho imvyeyi inywera ingumba iboneraho.

L.M. Where the mother cow drinks, the sterile one benefits.

P.M. Undeserving people benefit from the deserving ones.

This proverb reads alike with the preceding one. The two proverbs refer to two elementary needs that everybody has to fulfill for his living, that is eating and drinking. According to the proverbs, sterile cows do not deserve food and drink, they profit from the mother cows. This shows how illtreated are women who cannot give birth. They deserve nothing but death. This rejection of sterile women is characteristic of Burundian society. Barundi sterile women are likely to lose love and care from their husbands. Most of them, if not chased from home, they observe their husbands bringing other wives able to give children. This practice of bringing a second wife is a frequent consequence of the first's sterility in Burundi, and the sterile one has nothing to say.

The highest importance attributed to mothers in Burundian culture is linked with the necessity of taking care of them and protecting them from any eventual enemy. Being agreable with their children, they certainly have enemies which are not really apparent and who should be avoided. This presence of enemies in front of any cheerful and happy family comprising a mother is reflected in this proverb :

3. Imanga itemvya imvyeyi iba mu rugo.

L.M. A gulf that makes a mother cow fall down lies in the enclosure.

P.M. Our real enemies are not those we suspect.

We have seen that mothers are greatly valued in Burundi and dear to their families. In the proverb above, they are symbolized by a mother cow whose enemy is a gulf which lies in the enclosure. This gulf symbolizes eventual enemies for mothers in families and who are not really suspected. One's enclosure is a place rarely suspected because it is assumed to be known and everybody thinks he is familiar with it. However, it may comprise dangerous gulfs which are harmful to the cheerful mother cow. This reference to the

familiar enclosure stands for one's hypocrite friends. These friends are taken as dear and lovely but they may deceive he who takes them as confident. Not coming to his expectations, they may take away all what he loves namely the mother and children as well. This is the great misfortune one can undergo regarding the place of mothers and children in Burundi.

The proverb above mentioned is somehow similar to the following one :

4. Akagari kagarika imvyeyi.

L.M. The neighbourhood strikes a mother cow down.

P.M. People are offended by those who know them.

Like the preceding one, this proverb refers to imvyeyi (mother cow) to mean the cheerful and valuable mothers in Burundian families. Those mothers are frequently the object of hatred and jealousy from the neighbours who know and envy the happy families. To strike a mother cow down is assimilated to any misfortune caused by one's enemies. When considering the Burundian society, we realize that many people have as enemies their neighbours or even their relatives. These are normally supposed to be lovely but they are in most cases the very dangerous enemies. This proverb is then used to call for people's attention to their so called friends who may be very harmful despite their apparent kindness.

Another proverb reflecting the ideal of maternity in Burundi is the following :

5. Iyivyaye amashuri yicungura amarago.

L.M. It which gives birth to bull calves is delivered from lancets.

P.M. Mothers can expect help and support from their children.

In Burundian society, there was a habit of taking blood from cows with lancets . Any adult cow would undergo this practice. It was then fortunate to the mother cow which gave birth to bull calves because it would be saved from this as soon as it was the turn of the bulls. This symbol of a mother cow saved from lancets stands for any Burundian woman giving birth to boys. She was the happiest as she could expect respect and support. She was definitely accepted in her family thanks to the presence of her sons. Many people used to say to such mothers : 'urugo ni rwawe ' (the enclosure is yours) to mean that she is no more running the risk of being expelled from the family.

To conclude, maternity is the ideal social value linked with women in Burundian society. This value is expressed in many Kirundi proverbs referring to mother cows. They reflect the particularly valued childbirth and motherhood in Burundian conceptions.

4.1.3. Social values expressed through proverbs dealing with bulls

Any adult male is characterized by the physical strength and appearance reflecting his ability to dominate. This is the case of 'impfizi'(a bull) referred to in some Kirundi proverbs. Here, a bull, being an archetype of power and virility comes to symbolize the cultural values associated with men in Burundian culture.

4.1.3.1. The notion of power

As we said it, a bull in Burundian symbolic system is associated with a young man. The term 'bull' is used in many Kirundi proverbs to mean man's power and ability to protect others and dominate them. This is shown in the proverb :

1. Impfizi ntiyimirwa.

L.M. A bull cannot be turned away.

P.M. Men are free in their doings.

The user of this proverb refers to a bull which cannot be turned away to show that a man, thanks to his power, is dominant and uncompromising. In Burundian society, a man in a given family is the chief and decider of other members' fate. Barundi people attribute particular respect and faith in men and neither women nor children would dare to contradict them. If a man decides to do this or that, none can prevent him from doing so. He is powerful and all what he does is supposedly irrefutable.

Moreover, the power and strength associated with men make them assuring protectors. They are assumed to take care of other members of the family and assure their security. This is what is expressed in the proverb :

2. Akamarampaka ni impfizi ku rugomero.

L.M. What is peremptory is a bull at the watering trough.

P.M. The presence of a powerful protector makes the enemy go away.

The proverb refers to'impfizi'(bull) to show any strength and capacity affected by men who put away eventual enemies. We refer to Rodegem and Bapfutwabo(1961)who provide us with information about the way duties are shared among members of the family.The watering trough is a place where the cattle finds water to drink and it stands for the family's reunion. This proverb then shows how the presence of a man within a family is assuring. No one can dare to harm the family, he would be afraid of this protector. The security is assured and the family is convinced that there is no danger. This tranquillity provided by the presence of a man is often observed in many Burundian

families. On the contrary, his disappearance leads to the loss of respect and the family is object of fear and desperation. The enemy gets an opportunity to disturb the family profiting from its weakness and lack of powerful protector.

Again, the notion of power is expressed in the sense that the powerful people must be respected. This is what is expressed in the proverb :

3. Icimenyere gikubita impfizi urushi.

L.M . He who got into bad habits beats a bull with a hand.

P.M. He who never keeps control of himself is likely to do dangerous things.

If we consider the proverb, a bull is a strong animal that one would be foolish enough to beat it with a hand. This careless act shows how people may fail to keep powerful individuals at a respectful distance. We should be then careful and respect those who deserve it. Everybody should be aware of his weakness and recognize others'power and keep humble.

The necessity of humility towards one's promoter and provider of power is also expressed in the following proverb :

4. Impfizi ntisumba uwayiteretse.

L.M. A bull is not more important than its raiser.

P.M. An important man should remain respectful towards his promoter.

In this proverb, we recognize that a bull is a powerful animal but there must be someone who has raised it. So, the bull's power and strength depended on the raiser's effort and care. The proverb refers to the bull's power to mean some people's high place which should never make them ungrateful. Instead, they should keep humble and grateful towards those who helped them to be

powerful. This respect of one's promoter is very important in Burundian culture. Here, it is required to young people, who are strong and powerful to respect the old ones. An old man is respected for his age and for all what he might have achieved all along his life. A young man should respect his father and recognize that thanks to him he is alive. Among the old man's achievements is the young man himself, that is why he should never forget his own importance.

Moreover, if there are powerful individuals, they are also the ones who need much more protection. This is what is expressed in the proverb:

5. Impfizi ntirongora iba yisema.

L.M. A bull does not precede, otherwise it portends its death.

P.M. It is the powerful people who need to be protected.

We know that 'impfizi' (a bull) symbolizes power and strength in Burundian tradition. So, it is somehow paradoxical to see in the proverb above that this strong animal can never precede the cattle. It is always put in the middle of the line and the cows which precede play the role of guard. However, the bull remains powerful and respectable. This habit is observed in many cattle and it is referred to in the proverb to show that all important individuals are protected. They are mostly object of envy and jealousy, that is why they have to be guarded. And it is not everybody who has bodyguard, it is especially those important persons, and this implies the link between power and need of protection.

4.1.3.2. Reproductive force

Apart from the physical strength and power associated with a bull, it is also an archetype of virility and procreative element. Here Nsabimana (1991) presents a man symbolized by a bull as being physically strong and presenting virility. A bull is often referred to as breeding force for fecundation and it represents the marital authority. This idea of procreation linked with a bull is expressed in some proverbs related to this animal as in the following:

1. Ubusho butagira impfizi burarumba.

L.M. Cattle without a bull die out.

P.M. The presence of males is absolutely necessary for reproduction.

In this proverb, a bull is presented as an indispensable life-giving. Its presence within a cattle is absolutely required, otherwise, the latter would die out. The bull stands for a young man in Burundian symbolic system. The young man is assumed to be a fertilizing agent whose role is to increase the family. Traditionally in Burundi, it was a great honor and even felicity for a family to give birth to a boy. From him, the family expected further procreation and the perpetuity of its name. On the contray, a woman who gave birth to a girl was not as praised as the boy's mother. The girl was supposed to get married once grown up and then she would increase her family-in-law's name, not hers. That is why a boy was more highy valued than a girl.

Another proverb to illustrate this value of procreation is :

2. Nta nka zitagira impfizi.

L.M. There are no cows without a bull.

P.M. A leader is needed everywhere.

Here again, the importance of a bull within a cattle is stressed. Cows lacking a bull are no cows at all. It means that only the presence of a bull gives sense and existence to the cattle. As we said it earlier, a bull symbolizes a young man in Burundian society, whose role is mainly life - giving. His absence in a family is almost lack of life and a way to disappearance. The importance of men is due to their ability to fecundate since procreation is greatly necessary in a given family. The latter is supposed to be increased, what is a great honor.

The favour of reproducing as much as possible is not equally achieved by all men wishing so. This is what is expressed in the proverb :

3. Iyiganje yimya izindi zibona.

L.M. A stronger fecundates in the presence of others.

P.M. Powerful people always get favours.

The proverb above lets us notice the envy felt by the bulls who assist another fecundating. In Burundian cultural systems, this act of fecundating is assimilated to procreation and that procreation is honorable. The reproductive force linked to men is a great value in Burundian community and it lets them be appreciated. It is a great favour and he who fails to make fruitful this ability is likely to envy those who do so. It is a way of procreating and he who happens to procreate more than others is powerful. He is considered as the happiest for this achievement in this society favouring an increasing birthrate.

In sum, the symbol of 'impfizi'(a bull) used in some kirundi proverbs mostly stands for two main values in Burundian Community. It reflects the notion of power and strength associated with men and which make them powerful protectors. It also reflects their virility and ability to reproduce, which lead to the desirable increasing birthrate in Burundi.

4.1.4. Social values expressed in proverbs dealing with milk

In Burundian culture, 'amata' (milk) is considered as very beautiful, delicious and cheerful. It is the most preferable drink which can only be given to a lovely person. It is often referred to in some Kirundi proverbs to speak of wealthy situations or any kind of satisfying object. Proverbs related to this product are to be analysed as reflecting those values of wealth and one's satisfaction or happiness.

4.1.4.1. Wealth

In Burundian society as elsewhere, wealth is taken as a great value since it generally contributes to people's welfare and comfort. According to Rodegem and Bapfutwabo (1961) milk stands for richness in Burundian symbolic system. All people wish they were wealthy and self–sufficient. This value is often meant when referring to milk in some Kirundi proverbs. Integrated in Burundian cultural systems, milk may stand for one's wealth and possessions which are as desirable as this drink.

The expression of this value of wealth can be observed in the proverb :

1. Uwawe akwima amata ntakwima amahere.

L.M. A relative of yours refuses you milk but does not refuse you scabies.

P.M. A relative of yours may be reluctant to share with you his good times. But, when he faces hard times, he will come to you for help.

If we analyse the symbols used in this proverb, the key words are 'amata' (milk) and 'amahere' (scabies). In Burundian cultural systems, milk and scabies symbolize two very different situations. Milk reflects one's wealthy

situation whereas scabies show the miserable case in wich one needs help and assistance. So, the proverb above shows the attitude of an individual in different situations. In case of abundance and self-sufficiency, many people ignore and reject those they should come near and help if necessary. Barundi people accumulate someone having milk to those who are rich enough to think about others and help them. Their richness makes them proud and self confident. However, if they happen to lose their richness, they become more accessible and welcoming.They come back to those they had rejected because they need help. Wealth is then expressed with reference to milk, it is what everybody dreams of and it is symbolized by this cheerful drink in Burundian society.

The notion of wealth is also expressed in the proverb :

2. Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi.

I. L. With a woman, you share milk not water.

I. I. A Woman stays with you as long as you are rich. If you become poor, she leaves you.

Traditionally in Burundi, people who were rich could not drink water. They drank milk or beer and water was reserved for poor people. Whereas milk reflects wealth and comfort, water, like scabies, shows one's poverty and lack of other desirable kinds of drink. So, the proverb above is used to express the women's materialism. According to the proverb, they share with their husbands comfort but they rarely bear misery. Only a wealthy man can keep his wife at home, if he fails to fulfill her needs, he is likely to lose her. Again, this notion of wealth is expressed in the proverb above which shows women seeking wealth.

In addition, wealth is also expressed in the proverb showing the difference of individuals who are not equally rich. Wealth establishes a kind of

distance and incompatibility between poor persons and the rich ones. This is shown in the proverb :

3. Nta wusukiranya amata n'amateke.

L.M. No one mixes milk and cush-cush.

P.M. A good relationship is made between individuals who are equal.

In Burundian culture, milk and cush-cush are two different products which stand for two different situations as well. As we saw it, milk is regarded as delicious and enjoyable drink. It symbolizes comfort and self-sufficiency. Cush-cush, on the other hand, is regarded as bad food and many people do not like it. It reflects poverty. The proverb then expresses the necessity of associating people who are equal in the sense that it refers to things which are representative of two opposite states of wealth. Poor people should come next to other poor and the same for the rich ones. There is an incompatibility between richness and comfort assimilated with milk and poverty which is expressed when referring to cush-cush.

Furthermore, wealth is a great value so wished that everybody looks for it wherever it can be. In this sense, there are attractive places to which people go to look for possessions because they are expected there. This is expressed in the following proverb :

4. Amata asabwa aho ari.

L.M. Milk is asked for where it is.

P.M. You look for wealth where it seems to be.

In this proverb, milk stands for the generally desirable wealth all people wish to get. So, if they decide to look for these possessions, they know where

they go, that is where they expect success. We can take for example the case of cattle exchange in traditional Burundi. People used to ask for cows to those who had them in abundance. They usually went to the courts or to other rich persons who were assumed to have a big number of them. In the proverb then, to have milk which may be asked for, is richness itself. Those who need it know where it can be found. Rich persons are known and they always see people coming to them to ask for help, trying to create friendship with those wealthy individuals.

Another proverb reflecting the notion of wealth is the following :

5. Ingoma yaguhaye amata ntiguha amazi.

L.M A drum which gave you milk does not give you water.

P.M. He who loves you will always give you good things.

Again, this proverb refers to milk and water which respectively stand for abundance and poverty. We have seen that someone who gives you milk is a lovely person who is likely to bring you comfort. On the contrary, he who gives you water, in Burundian conceptions, is considered as an enemy. Therefore, the proverb is showing that people who love you will never lead you to poverty. Instead, they are likely to help you to get richer and feel comfortable. The proverb also refers to a drum to mean Burundian traditional kingdom from which many people could get their possessions like cows or fields. The king used to give cows and fields to his faithful people who became rich and proud of the king's support. Then, they tried to keep this friendship with the king so as to remain in good terms and supported.

4.1.4.2. Happiness

Some people may confuse wealth and happiness but they are really different. Of course one's self-sufficiency contributes to his happiness and

comfort. Nevertheless, it does not imply that all rich persons are happy. That is why in some cases, milk, taken as enjoyable and very delicious, means anything conferring happiness and satisfaction. We have seen previously that it may stand for one's wealth and comfort but what is desirable is not richness itself. It is rather to feel happy and satisfied, whatever one's wealthy situation. This feeling of joy and satisfaction is also expressed in some proverbs dealing with milk as in the following :

1. Urugo rurimwo umugabo runywa amata.

L.M. An enclosure in which there is a man drinks milk.

P.M. A family in which there is a man gets everything.

For Barundi people, the presence of a man in a given family is very reassuring for the members.The family is likely to feel happy and secure from any danger. If we consider how milk is regarded in Burundian society, it is the most delicious drink that everybody would like to feed the children with. Children who get milk in abundance are the happiest. They are said to be from respected family. The proverb above shows then how satisfying and reassuring is a man in his family. Whatever their possessions, the members of the family are happy because the man is there to keep the family's honor and respectability. For in Burundi orphans and widows are vulnerable, the presence of a man is assimilated to the evident happiness when drinking milk to mean this tranquillity and happiness he brings to his family.

The following proverb also illustrates this notion of happiness associated with milk in Burundian culture.

2. Amata y'umworo ni umufa.

L.M. The milk of a poor is sauce.

P.M. A poor person must rely on what he can get.

Here again, milk means something very desirable and delicious and it is sauce for poor people. Milk is compared to sauce to show that those who cannot get milk give value to the sauce. They take it as precious and valuable because it is all what they can get and that can bring them a kind of satisfaction. Regardless of the general value given to the sauce i.e. the less valuable food, it can replace milk for poor people who take it as important and delicious. If they have it, they feel happy because they cannot think of the precious milk.

The general view that milk is delicious and likable make it ideal that no one can pretend to detest it. In Burundian mentality, it is considered as desirable for all people. Many people may be interested in different things and events but they all have the same objective i.e to feel happy and satisfied. This is what all people need whatever their orientations. In this sense, we can analyse the following proverb :

3. Uwusomera make ni uwuyabuze.

L.M. He who drinks little milk when eating paste, is the one who cannot get it.

P.M. No one can refuse to feel happy.

In Burundian culture, to drink milk when eating (paste) is the most preferable kind of meal and he who gets this favour is the happiest. This meal is assimilated to any kind of joy that no one can deny. In the proverb above, milk is presented as so enjoyable and satisfactory that it cannot be refused. Here then, milk stands for that satisfaction and happiness that all people look for, whatever

their interest. People may enjoy themselves differently but they all seek this satisfaction and joy. They all need to enjoy life as well as possible and nobody prefers sadness and misfortune.

Finally, the following proverb also expresses the happiness and satisfaction associated with milk in Burundian Culture.

4. Iyinizwe n'amata nta wundi mwerera.

L.M. For what is smothered by milk, there is no other cure.

P.M. There is no safety for someone offended by his supposed protector.

Normally, milk is considered as the cleanest and soft drink one can offer to young children or people who are ill. It is at the same time delicious and feeding, and everyone in Burundian society takes it as what one should have recourse to in case of illness. Therefore, if as in the proverb above, milk happens to be smothering, there is no other cure to have recourse to. The proverb refers to smothering milk to mean an unexpected offense from a confident. If he who is supposed to bring you happiness and comfort harms you, it is not easy to find someone else to help you out. The delicious and enjoyable milk is compared to an individual who loves you and who can never be thought of as harmful. This individual is supposed to protect you and make you feel happy. So, if this one changes his mind and becomes spiteful, you are likely to perish.

4.2. Data analysis according to some linguistic theories

The analysis made follows certain theories presented in the second chapter. We are particularly concerned with the symbolic quality of proverbs and consequently the Structuralist theory of symbols discussed by Ortigues

(1962) and Levi Strauss quoted in Alleau (1977). It is also worth mentioning the Linguistic determinism suggested by Yule (1985).

4.2.1. Symbolic quality of proverbs

As we said it earlier, the interpretation of proverbs is based on symbols used in proverbs and their cultural meaning. Here then, we follow Okpewho (1992) who discusses the brevity or economy of expression found in proverbs and which is linked to the metaphorical or symbolic quality. He says that it is the most widely acknowledged stylistic quality of proverbs. From this view, our data is to be analysed according to the symbols used. As far as Kirundi proverbs related to cattle are concerned, the symbols are cows, bulls, mother cows and milk. These symbols are observed in the following proverbs:

1. Iyabaye nya mbwa ntiba nya nka.
L.M. It which has been a dog cannot become a cow.
P.M. An underestimated person will never get respected.

In Burundian culture, 'imbwa' (a dog) and 'inka' (a cow) are two domestic animals which symbolize two opposite concepts. They relatively reflect disconsideration and prestige or high position. In this sense, we understand the proverb as reflecting the important place symbolized by cows and which cannot be afforded by people from low class. Here, we refer to Harerimana (1998) who assumes that cows reflect high reputation in Burundian society.

2. Agapfuye karatuba inyama y'impfizi ntiyotetswe mu rwavya.

L.M. What is dead is lowered, the meat of a bull could not be cooked in an earthern pot.

P.M. The loss of power leads to disconsideration.

As we said it earlier, Kirundi proverbs refer to 'impfizi' (a bull) to show man's power and respectability. In the proverb above, this symbol is used to show the possible shift from respect to disconsideration. Here, disconsideration is symbolized by 'urwavya' (an earthern pot) which reflects poverty and modesty in Burundian symbolic system. Only poor persons cooked in earthern pots what shows one's modesty. In the proverb above then, we understand that power is presented as a quality or value which may be lost at any time. The proverb is used to remind people, even those who seem to be very important that humility is always necessary regardless of one's power.

3. Ijisho rivuye ku mvyeyi risubira ku muguta.

L.M. The eye which leaves the mother cow, comes back to the old one.

P.M. He who loses his important things gives value to what he had rejected.

Here, the mother cow stands for the valuable young mother and the old cow symbolizes an old woman who has been rejected. This was mostly observed in traditional Burundi where Barundi men used to bring wives one after another and it was always the youngest who was cherished. This is to say that she was the most appreciated and loved but if the man happened to lose her, if she died for example, he was likely to come back to the old one.

Therefore, the reference to mother cows in Kirundi proverbs shows the importance of young mothers in Burundian culture.

4. Ico umutima wishakiye isogo zisumba amata.

L.M. What heart prefers, bitter vegetables are more important than milk.

P.M. Preference depends upon the appreciator, there is no general view on tastes.

Again, there is also reference to milk in Kirundi proverbs to express one's satisfaction or happiness. Milk is supposed to be delicious and enjoyable in Burundian conceptions. However, it can be denied by people who like bitter vegetables. The latter in Burundian culture, symbolize poverty and lack of delicious food. Many people do not like them. Nevertheless, in the proverb above, they are referred to as something which can be more enjoyable than milk. So, the proverb shows that there is diversity of tastes.

4.2.2. Structuralist analysis

From the previous point, we acknowledge that proverbs are constructed on the basis of symbols. In order to interpret proverbs, we have to consider the symbols' cultural meanings.

In this sense, Ortigues (1962) proposes the structuralist theory of symbols which holds that there is a production of equivalences to formal structures of a given society in material contents. As for Levi Strauss quoted in Alleau (1977) in order to interpret a symbol, it would be sufficient to decode it and integrate it in the society's symbolic systems. They are interpreted according to Burundian culture and the place attributed to the referents.

In this respect, we can analyse the following proverb:

1. Izisangiye urugo zisangira urunyago.

L.M. Cattle sharing the same cattle–shed share spoliation as well.

P.M. Those who live in the same place share the same social life.

If we try to integrate the symbol of cattle sharing the same cattle – shed in Burundian symbolic system, it stands for people of the same family, living together.It represents people who are members of a household under one roof. We have also seen that in Burundian culture, the spoliation of one's cows was associated with dishonor and misfortune. The proverb then shows that people of the same family have the same fate. One should take care of his family's reputation because he who happened to misbehave affected others. Here, these concepts of honor and fate of families are to be protected and looked at as formal structures.

Another proverb which follows the structuralist theory of symbols is:

2. Ubwitonzi bwashikirije ingumba inkuba.

L.M. Kindness helped the sterile cow to reach the thunder.

P.M. Thanks to their moral qualities, disconsidered people can do important things.

The user of this proverb refers to the fact of reaching the thunder to mean any great achievement. This achievement is curiously made by the normally disconsidered individuals symbolized by a sterile cow. Integrated in Burundian cultural system, a sterile woman is valueless but the normal qualities may help her to come up with stability. This is a great achievement for her because stertile women were generally obliged to quit their homes. Therefore, the reference to 'ingumba' (a sterile cow) also shows the use of material content

i.e the cow which is an equivalence to the fact that sterile women are illtreated and underestimated.

4.2.3. Linguistic determinism

In our research hypothesis, Burundian culture is reflected through Kirundi language in general and proverbs in particular. In this sense, the theory suggested by Yule (1985) is Linguistic determinism. This holds that language determines thought. Here, the way your language is organized determines how speakers of that language perceive the world around them. We apply this theory in our data in the sense that the choice of symbols used in proverbs determines what people value and how life should be.

Moreover, the theory above joins Wardhaugh (1986) in his attempt to make an Introduction to Sociolinguistics. He claims that the culture of a people finds reflection in the language they employ. For him, they come to use their language in ways that reflect what they value and what they do. This can be observed in the proverb:

1. Impundu y'inka ingana ingoma.
L.M. The praise of cows is equal to a drum.
P.M. You acclaim cows as you do for the Kingdom.

In traditional Burundi, the King was very respected and even praised in poetry. Here, we refer to Nkurunziza (1986) who provides us with information about the traditional Burundi. The King was not taken as other human beings but as a divine one, chosen by God to be a leader. His acclamation was then special and very important.

In the proverb above, this consideration is reflected since it refers to the King and cows which were both highly valued. The proveb then determines what people value. Here, the proverb is used to show the importance of cows which are compared to the respectable King. The acclamation of the King was mostly made by the people he led and who expected certain advantages from him. As he used to attribute fields and cows to his people, the latter would praise him and acclaim his acts. Similarly, a man who possessed many cows was very respected, and like the King, observed a number of people coming to him to ask for cows. This system of giving cows as gifts to some people was called 'ubugabire' and it conferred high reputation and prestige to the donor.

Another proverb to illustrate this reflection of people's thought and considerations in language is the following:

2. Gasimbi ntisumba gasera.

L.M. A female cow cannot dominate a bull.

P.M. Women are always inferior to men.

In this proverb, 'gasimbi' means a female cow whereas 'gasera' stands for a bull. We notice that a woman, symbolized by a female cow in Burundian symbolic system, can never dominate a man symbolized by a bull. Men are always more powerful than women in Burundian culture. Here again, people's thought is reflected through language. In Burundian conceptions, men are superior to women. Barundi people think that women can never dominate men. The symbols of a bull and female cow come to reflect what Barundi people value, what they do and their thoughts. This superiority of men to women is due to the mentality that men are linked with power which makes them feel high and powerful. Here, we consider Ntabona quoted in Harerimana (1998) who says that women were modest and obedient.

Therefore, we notice that in Burundi women appear to be very submitting to the authority of men. They are required to keep silent whenever men can speak and decide. Women recognize their husbands'power and authority. They calmly accept to be dominated. They are denied access to authority and power, they are rather said to be naturally weak.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The man's ability to use language explains more than any other human characteristic the development and expression of culture. Language is used to express the speakers'beliefs and considerations. It determines what they value and how life around them is or should be. Language proves to be a way for speakers to express ideas, opinions, values to name but a few. Here, proverbs seem to be the remarkable means of expressing abstract ideas such as cultural values. These are assimilated to the desires and ideals of individuals stressed in societies and which vary from one society to another.

The present study suggested then an illustration of the reflection of a given culture throughout language. The foregoing analysis was concerned with Kirundi proverbs related to cattle. They were analysed and interpreted on the basis of the symbols used. These proverbs were assumed to express certain Burundian cultural values reflected through the symbols of cows, bulls, mother cows and milk.

When carrying out the study, we organized the work in four chapters. The first chapter mostly stated the problem of the study and its concern. The second chapter was concerned with the review of literature related to the subject and its theoretical framework. As literature pertainiting to a linguistic analysis like this, we considered some definitions of key words. We also discussed such theories as linguistic determinism, structuralist theory of symbols and the symbolic quality of proverbs. The concept of proverbs was also discussed at the level of their linguistic aspect, the role they play as well as their domain of study which is sociolinguistics.

The third chapter dealt with the methodology applied in our research study. This comprises the procedure of data collection and that of data analysis. It also presented the problems encountered.

Finally, the fourth chapter consisted in analysing our data i.e Kirundi proverbs related to cattle as expressing Burundian cultural values. For analysis, two main steps of interpretation were achieved. First, we made a classification of our data according to themes and the referents. These are the notions of social prestige and social relationships symbolized by cows. There is also the ideal of maternity in Burundi symbolized by mother cows. The third referent considered was bull which stands for power and reproductive force. As far as the symbol of milk is concerned, it stands for people's wealth and happiness. The second step was concerned with the interpretation of data according to theories presented in chapter two.

Furthermore, if we analysed proverbs related to cattle, we could not pretend to have studied all Kirundi proverbs. These are multiple in Kirundi language and cultural values as well. That is why further researches in this area are encouraged. Kirundi language also comprises many elements. So, any scholar interested in Burundian culture many find another linguistic element which shows this link between language and culture.

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APPENDIX

I. Proverbs dealing with cows in general

1. Uwutakuzi ntakurusha inka.

L.M. He who does not know you does not have more cows than you.

P.M. He who does not know you cannot pretend to be wealthier than you.

2. Uwutagira inka ntagira igabo.

L.M. He who does not have cows lacks pride.

P.M. He who is not wealthy becomes humble.

3. Icaha caha inka.

L.M. A mistake picks cows.

P.M. To a mistake committed, dishonor is a consequence.

4. Umutima mwiza uruta inka.

L.M. A good heart is better than a cow.

P.M. Good behaviour is more important than wealth.

5. Impundu y'inka ingana ingoma.

L.M. The praise of cows is equal to a drum.

P.M. You acclaim cows as you do for the Kingdom.

6. Iyabaye nya mbwa ntiba nya nka.

L.M. It which has been a dog cannot be a cow.

P.M. An underestimated person will never get respected.

7. Nyamwanka iyo biva yatutse umwami w'inka.

L.M. He who hates where things come from insulted the cows'king.

P.M. It is no use to quarrel with someone you need.

8. Uwaguhaye inka ni we ayikwaka.

L.M. He who gave you a cow is the one who takes it back.

P.M. An irresponsible man loses his dearest friends.

9. Amunguranka niyo mazikesha.

L.M. The great intention of increasing cows decreases them.

P.M. When you have a strong greed for gain, it leads you to total loss.

10. Izisangiye urugo zisangira urunyago.

L.M. Cattle sharing the same cattle- shed share spoliation as well.

P.M. Those who live the same place share the same social life.

11. Kutaja inama kurasisha inka mu jisho.

L.M. Not holding a council makes shoot the cow in the eye.

P.M. People who do not understand one another are likely to fail.

II. Proverbs dealing with mother cow

1. Ingumba irira ku mvyeyi.

L.M. A sterile cow eats on the mother cow.

P.M. Undeserving people benefit from the deserving ones.

2. Aho imvyeyi imywera inguma iboneraho.

L.M. Where the mother cow drinks a sterile one benefits.

P.M. Undeserving people benefit from the deserving ones.

3. Ubwitonzi bwashikirije ingumba inkuba.

L.M. Kindness helped the sterile cow to reach the thunder.

P.M. Thanks to their moral qualities, disconsidered people can do important things.

4. Imanga itemvya imvyeyi iba mu rugo.

L.M. A gulf that makes a mother cow fall down lies in the enclosure.

P.M. Our real enemies are not those we suspect.

5. Akagari kagarika imvyeyi.

L.M. The neighbourhood strikes a mother cow down.

P.M. People are offended by those who know them

6. Iyivyaye amashuri yicungura amarago.

L.M. It which gives birth to bull calves is delivered from lancets.

P.M. Mothers can expect help and support from their children.

7. Ijisho rivuye ku mvyeyi risubira ku muguta.

L.M. The eye which leaves the mother cow comes back to the old one.

P.M. He who loses his important things gives value to what he had rejected.

III. Proverbs dealing with bulls

1. Impfizi ntiyimirwa.

L.M. A bull cannot be turned away.

P.M. Men are free in their doings.

2. Akamarampaka ni impfizi ku rugomero.

L.M.What is peremptory is a bull at the watering trough.

P.M. The presence of a powerful protector makes the enemy go away.

3. Gasimbi ntisumba Gasera.

L.M. A female cow cannot dominate a bull.

P.M. Women are always inferior to men.

4. Agapfuye karatuba inyama y'impfizi ntiyotetswe mu rwavya.

L.M. What is dead is lowered the meat of a bull could not be cooked in an earthern pot.

P.M. The loss of power leads to disconsideration.

5. Icimenyere gikubita impfizi urushi.

L.M. He who got into bad habits beats a bull with a hand.

P.M. He who never keeps control of himself does dangerous things.

6. Impfizi ntisumba uwayiteretse.

L.M. A bull is not important than its raiser.

P.M. An important man should remain respectful towards his promoter.

7. Impfizi ntirongora iba yisema.

L.M. A bull does not precede, otherwise it portends its death.

P.M. It is the powerful people who need guard.

8. Ubusho butagira impfizi burarumba.

L.M. Cattle without a bull die out.

P.M. The presence of males is absolutely necessary for reproduction.

9. Nta nka zitagira impfizi.

L.M. There are no cows without a bull.

P.M. The absence of males in a race is non existence itself.

10. Iyiganje yimya izindi zibona.

L.M. A stronger bull fecundates in the presence of others.

P.M. Powerful people always get favours.

IV. Proverbs dealing with milk

1. Uwawe akwima amata ntakwima amahere.

L.M. A relative of yours refuses you milk but does not refuse you scabies.

P.M. A relative of yours may be reluctant to share with you his good times. But when he faces hard times, he will come to you for help.

2. Umugore musangira amata ntimusangira amazi.

L.M. With a woman, you share milk, not water.

P.M. Women stay with you as long as you are rich. If you become poor, they leave you.

3. Ntawusukiranya amata n'amateke.

L.M. No one mixes milk and cush- cush.

P.M. A good relationship is made between individuals who are equal.

4. Amata asabwa aho ari.

L.M. Milk is asked for where it is.

P.M. You look for richness where it seems to be.

5. Ingoma yaguhaye amata ntiguha amazi.

L.M. A drum which gave you milk does not give you water.

P.M. He who loves you will always give you good things.

6. Urugo rurimwo umugabo runywa amata.

L.M. An enclosure in which there is a man drinks milk.

P.M. A family in which there is a man gets everything.

7. Amata y'umworo ni umufa.

L.M. The milk of a poor is sauce.

P.M. A poor person must rely on what he can get.

8. Uwusomera make ni uwuyabuze.

L.M. He who drinks little milk when eating paste is the one who misses it.

P.M. No one can deny happiness unless he cannot get it.

9. Ico umutima wishakiye isogo zisumba amata.

L.M. What heart prefers , bitter vegetables are more important than milk.

P.M. Preference depends upon the appreciator, there is no general view on tastes.

I0. Iyinizwe n'amata nta wundi mwerera.

L.M. For what is smothered by milk, there is no other soft cure.

P.M. There is no safe for someone offended by his supposed protector.