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Sociocultural prerequisites for understanding the Rundi nomenclature:the case of indigenous names

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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

SOCIOCULTURAL PREREQUISITES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE RUNDI NOMENCLATURE:

The Case of Indigenous Names

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DEDICATION

To all of you who helped me from my first step up to this level, accepted to be disturbed so that I become who I am today, I do dedicate this thesis.

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I feel a great dept of gratitude to many people who have been of great importance to my life at school.

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I owe profound gratitude to my dear wife, Claudine NIZIGIYIMANA and our son, Brian Shalom NDAYISHIMIYE.

I finally convey my feelings to relatives, friends and classmates. May all of them find in these pages the fruit of our mutual understanding and combined efforts.

To all of you that I could not be able to mention here, but who contributed in carrying out this work, my thanks go to you all.

ABSTRACT

The present work aims at gathering helpful information about the indigenous way of providing names to new born of Burundians. It considers names as not being arbitrary labels, but socio-cultural functions and meanings. Therefore, the indigenous naming process is not a simple task of identifying people from one another. Instead, it is a means by which people transmit messages, either to the named person, or to his surroundings. Moreover, naming plays an integrative role in that a name gives the person who carries it a place within the Society. Indeed, indigenous rundi names are closely linked to the Culture and the Burundian belief and philosophy are embedded in them. The present work helped to find out that Rundi indigenous names are multidimensional and multifunctional, full of images and not easily understandable by uninformed readers. When trying to compare indigenous and modern names, I realize that parents today focus more on how the name sounds than on its content. Today's Rundi names are taken for granted and the culture values reflected in the indigenous ones are melt away in the same way as a good number or traditional values are dying away in the modern society.

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CHAPTER I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I.1. Introduction

Communication is of paramount importance for people gathered in speech communities. This communication is, therefore, done through various means, and language is one of them. Nonetheless, language as a means of communication is not a mere tool for arranging ideas and thoughts through utterances. It rather goes beyond the literal meanings of words to reflect the social life of people using it, as well as its context of use.

Language has the power to evoke realities beyond the literal linguistic content of what is being talked about. Thus, there is no way of predicting what a word means just from hearing it because a word outside the context in which it is used is still ambiguous in its meaning. So, in deciphering the meaning of a particular word or expression, one should first be aware of the context or situation in which such a word or expression is used.

When two people speak with one another, there is always more going on than just conveying a message. The language used by the participants in any communicative situation is always influenced by a number of social factors which define either the relationship between the participants or the social environment in which the communication takes place. That is why, when choosing an appropriate utterance for a situation, there are factors that must be taken into account in order to effectively convey the message to other participants. Those factors are the social setting and the aim or purpose of the communication, among others.

The naming practices of the indigenes contributed to the construction and the understanding of the social relations that bound people together and with their surroundings. In other words, their names reflected the issues at stake of the society.

In fact, people communicate or convey some messages through names. Thus, names are part of every culture and they are of enormous importance both to the people who carry them and to the societies that give them. Normally, a name is used to distinguish one person from another. The person who carries a name thereby receives an identity and a place within the society. Names can then identify a class or category of things, or a single thing, either uniquely or within a given context. Indeed, a personal name identifies a specific unique and identifiable individual person.

Nonetheless, despite their universality, (that is all over the world names are used) there is a great deal of difference from one culture to another in how names are given. In Burundian culture, the naming process has not always been a means to identify one person from another. Children's names might be alphabetical by birth order like "Nyandwi", the seventh child; "Minani", the eighth child; "Nyabenda", the ninth child; etc. It was also common in the recent years to name a son after his father or grandfather.

An indigenous name could describe the characteristics of the named individual or the circumstances in which he/she was born. Indigenous names can, thus, be clearly understood when placed in their socio-cultural context. The name 'Bazompora' (They will revenge me), for example, may express a situation through which the parents have been powerlessly ill-treated by their neighbours and that someone else may come to take revenge for them. All hope of revenge is, then, placed in their newly born baby.

The task of providing a name to a baby is not done at random or accidentally. Parents have to think of it deeply according to what they want to mean or what they wish the newborn to become in the future. So, if today's Burundian names seem to be fantasist, indigenous ones were not only given in order to identify individuals, but also to express ideas, inner feelings and/or emotions. For instance, a name like "Bapfekurera" comes to express the reality of the life of the baby's parents in their neighbourhood. The name means that children born before the newly named one died. This implies that parents have despaired in such a way that they do not really hope that they will succeed in bringing the baby up. It is thereby clear that indigenous names, like figures of speech, are ways of using language to convey or suggest meaning beyond the literal meaning of words as earlier said.

A child is for his/her parents a precious thing; the reason why all the names are there to provide the child with blessings and best wishes. Though some names may look like a curse for uninformed hearers, parents always have good intentions while naming their babies. A name like "Kabwa" which means "A small dog", for example, seems to be an underestimation towards the person being named. However, parents do so to prevent death from taking the bearer of this name.

Indeed, through some indigenous names, it is easy to know or understand the period during which a child was born and/or the event prevailing at that period. A pertinent example is the name "Ndimurwimo" which means "I live in quarrel". The latter shows that the child was born either during a time of hatred or bad relationship in his/her parents' neighbourhood, or during times of war in the country.

Other cases that ought to be mentioned here are those when a child could take his/her father's or grandfather's name, but it was not frequent. That was

done so as to perpetuate the history of the family and it was more common for people of the higher rank than those of the lower one. This comes to contribute in the identification of individuals from the same roots. In Bujumbura for instance, there are names which refer immediately to someone we knew before. Thus, when we hear such names, we immediately see not only the individual referred to, but also the entire family because all the family members bear the same name. Pertinent examples are names like "Kamatari", "Gatogato", "Budabuda"... Most people bearing such names are of the same family.

Nowadays, there are people who keep on applying a reflected meaningful way of providing names. In fact, there are still some parents who give names which reflect the reality, the situation or the event prevailing at the time of birth of the bearer. However, this may bring criticisms that those kinds of names are "heavy" for a child or simply outdated. For instance, it is usual to hear utterances like "Urya mwana bamuhaye ikizina c'abantu bakuze" which means "That kid has been given a name of old people", as if there are some names for old people and some others for children. That is the reason why parents prefer to give their children small names like "Keza", "Ntore", "Kamikazi", etc.

It is worth noting that those so-called heavy names may, in some cases, show an established social relationship between members of a certain community. Therefore, people who bear such kinds of names should not be ashamed or frustrated because, most of the time, those names constitute a part of their history or a part of their lives.

As defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, a name is "a word or words that a particular person, animal, place or thing is known by". In the pre-Christian Rundi nomenclature, however, we realize that a name is more meaningful than this definition. Indigenous names are given in

accordance with not only a certain belief, but also with a socio-cultural environment in the parents' neighbourhood. Then, the Rundi nomenclature, especially the indigenous names, contributes in the continuity of the history of the society in general and that of families in particular. Pre-Christian names can thus be studied at various levels. As for the present work, it will deal with the socio-cultural level to find out the possible messages that Indigenous names bear.

I.2. Statement of the Problem

The present work considers naming as an important aspect of the Burundian society. It considers names as not being arbitrary labels, but socio-cultural tags that have socio-cultural functions and meanings. Indigenous names are message bearers if we take into account the socio-cultural environment in which they are applied. Therefore, through Indigenous names, it is not only the matter of identifying individuals as it is defined in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, but also an expression of feelings in the neighbourhood at the time of birth of the child who is to be named. At this juncture, it is important to note that the act of naming is not a simple task of a child's parents. It rather concerns the family as a whole, on the one hand and the society, on the other hand.

The subject under study is going to depict the Burundian society and culture of the Indigenous period. In fact, it seeks to make people understand various Indigenous names and the reason behind the naming process.

Many of the works dealing with naming seem to put aside the study of Indigenous names. Today, people naming their newborn babies put much importance to how a name sounds more than its content. In this case, one may realize that some people bear names which do not remind them of anything

about their existence or which they are not proud of, simply because they still ignore their names' real meanings.

I.3. Aim of the Study

From the beginning of the existence of human kind up to now, the need of giving and bearing a name has been essential. An individual, being a social and historical creature, ought to have and keep a name for designation and identification purpose. Referring to the Holy Bible (Genesis 2:19), Lyons (1977:215) states that "the basic function of words has been seen as that of naming". He goes on arguing that names, as they are employed in everyday language behaviour, have characteristics of being referential and vocative. Referential because they are frequently used simply to draw the hearer's attention to the presence of the person being named. The vocative function is meant in their being used to attract the attention of the person being called or summoned. As for Ntahombaye (1983: 8), names have a semantic content. He points out that the semantic content of names is indication of the experience (life), be it of the bearer of the name, of his/her parents or of the whole family.

This work aims at helping people come up with meanings of their respective names without ever complaining about and/or blaming them. It will thereby provide meanings which can help them understand the basis of the Rundi nomenclature. In fact, Indigenous names will be analyzed socially regarding the Burundian culture.

This work, indeed, targeted at giving additional information to what has been already done by other researchers concerning Burundian names. However, the study of Indigenous names is very complex. That is the reason why the present work will be concerned with the socio-cultural aspect only.

I.4. Research questions

In our society, the act of naming has always been primordial. However, it is changing day after day as far as the meaning of indigenous names and Christian ones is concerned. The following research questions will guide this work:

i) Are the indigenous names related to culture and society?

ii) If the indigenous names change their connotative meaning, do they affect the Burundian culture?

iii) Do parents nowadays take into account the idea that names have functions of keeping and fixing history of people while giving a name to a newborn?

I.5. Hypotheses

The present study will be guided by the following hypotheses:

1. The understanding of the meaning conveyed through indigenous names requires the understanding of the Burundian culture.
2. Indigenous names are part of the Burundian culture; if we abandon them, we abandon a part of the culture.

I.6. Motivation

The choice of this subject among so many others arose from a good number of authors who did much to contribute, through their writings, to the promotion of the Burundian culture, such as Ntahombaye (1983), Bigangara (1982), Rodegem (1965), Sabukwigura (2001), Karorero (2006), to name but a few.

The above writers have put much interest on Rundi names and have brought much contribution in bringing out explanations and meanings concerning Rundi names. However, though they did much, they did not close the researches. The

above mentioned works led me to do a research on indigenous names and study them from a socio-cultural standpoint which seems to be not deeply exploited. It therefore seeks to determine the socio-cultural pre requisites for understanding them.

1.7. Scope of the study

A desire to gather information about indigenous names in the Burundian socio-cultural context directs this research to the sociolinguistic domain.
Nevertheless, since the latter is too broad, I am limited to a relatively restricted field which is anthroponomy. The focus is on the indigenous s; that is the names which were commonly given before the arrival of the colonizers. I selected names which are not related to God because those related to God take place with the arrival of Christianity in Burundi. The indigenous names show clearly that they are closely related to culture and Society, and hence, that their understanding presupposes the understanding of Culture and Society. The Kirundi language has numerous names and each of them is a vehicle of message. I could not pretend to study them all because it would have been pretentious or even unfruitful. I have limited my study to names describing the behaviour of Burundians. I have focussed on the aspect of culture to help in the understanding of those names.

1.8. Definitions of key terms

Society:

1. People in general, living together in Communities.
2. A particular community of people who share the same customs, laws, etc.

Indigenous: Belonging to a particular place, rather than coming to it from somewhere else.

Culture:

1. The customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group.
2. A country, a group, etc. with its own beliefs, etc.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

II.0. Introduction

The topic of names is a multidisciplinary field that has occupied the attention of philosophers of language, anthropologists, linguists and ordinary people. Personal names can best be analyzed in the combination of both philosophical and anthropological notions. Burundians of the indigenous period attached much importance to names and naming practices. The knowledge about Rundi indigenous names gives an insight into the Burundian culture, philosophy, thought and environment.

As earlier said, the concern of the present work is to analyze the socio-cultural behaviour that is adopted by Burundians of the pre-colonial period in their naming process. This chapter intends to look at works written by previous researchers that are related to the present study. It also intends to show to which extent those works are related to or different from ours.

From the beginning of the world and all over the world, people live in a constant interaction in their everyday lives. They express their feelings, ideas and emotions through different means. In fact, it is by means of language that people can communicate and convey effectively messages and life experience.

As the way of communication may vary from society to society, from period to period, from place to place, etc.; each people has its own way of using language, though there may be things that are common. On the one hand, the way Africans express their feelings in general during the naming process is different from Europeans'. In this connection, Agyekum (2006: 208) states as follows:

> *African and Ghanaian names are quite different from those the western societies where people take their father's last names. While Western names are predictable, African names are generally not predictable, for until the child is born and under what circumstances it is born, the name cannot be determined with accuracy.*

On the other hand, indigenes had a way of naming different from that of Burundians of the present days. For Indigenes, naming children was not a simple need of identifying them. It was rather a good way of conveying messages to members of the society. This was done either to communicate something to the neighbour or somebody else or to deliver a feedback, a kind of response to the message gotten. In former times, Burundians had a strong national tradition if civilization had not come to break down the respect of their authenticity. Though modernity is good, it came to weaken the Burundian expressions and ideas encoded through names.

According to Ntahombaye (1983 :7),

> *Les noms des personnes ou anthroponymes sont une réalité linguistique puisque ce sont des messages verbaux dont les signes sont ceux de la langue quotidienne. Ils sont aussi une réalité ethnologique car ils sont le lieu de l'expression culturelle dans sa genèse et son contenu. Ils sont également une réalité psycho-sociale car ils disent, et par là même, affirment et renforcent le réseau des relations dans lequel l'individu se définit socialement et dans lequel joue sa sonalité.*

This can be translated as follows:

> *Personal names or anthroponyms are a linguistic reality for they are verbal messages whose signs are those of the daily language. They are also an ethnologic reality as they are the place of cultural expression in its genesis and content. They are equally a psychosocial reality for they say, and by that, maintain and reinforce the network of relations in which an individual socially defines himself and in which he plays his role.*

As for Micomibi (1983: 22),

> *Nommer, c'est reconnaître dans la mesure où le nom individuel a une signification sexuelle; c'est-à-dire qu'il se choisit en fonction du sexe. Ensuite vient l'idée que les relations entre les hommes et les femmes s'expriment également dans l'usage respectif qu'ils font de leur nom*

. This can be translated as follows:

> *Naming is recognizing in the case when the individual name has a sexual meaning. This means that it is chosen taking into account the sex. After, it comes the idea that the relations between men and women are expressed in the usage that they make with their name.*

Through the above quotations, it becomes obvious that some names given at a certain period become comic and nonsense at the same time. For instance, in some cases, a girl whose father's name is "Gahungu" (a small boy) is to be

given that name to which a Christian one is to be added. eg: Gahungu Claudine. This may not be comic today just because names are provided without thinking deeply of their meaning. But it seems odd to me as if a boy was to be named "Kamikazi Emmanuel" for example. Today, if it could happen to a boy to bear such a name, he would be likely to be laughed at just because "Kamikazi" is normally a name for girls and "Emmanuel" a male name. However, that second case becomes much more nonsensical than the first, may be because we are in a patriarchal society.

Likewise, a name like "Ciza", which is normally assigned to children born after twins can be given to all the children born from Mr Ciza, the father. Thus, "Ciza" does not have the same meaning as before. That is why it is very important to be objective and think twice before giving names to children, since a name may affect its bearer in one way or another and then provoke a psychological impact.

II.1. Name

II.1.1. Definition and Description

The Britannica World Language Dictionary defines name as "the distinctive appellation by which a person or a thing is known". Likewise, the *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines name as "a word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or a thing". From these definitions, one may only note the role played by a name in distinguishing persons or things from each other. As far as this study is concerned, it should be understood as referring to people, not to things.

We can distinguish various types of names, among which proper and personal ones. Proper names are names of persons as well as places, or certain special things. Such names are typically capitalized. Concerning personal names, these

are the names given to people, but can be used as well for some animals and natural or man-made inanimate objects. As proper nouns, these names frequently have their first-letter capitalized. Every human being must possess at least one name. In this connection, Algeo (1992: 728) points out that "People are almost invariably named, indeed, a human being without a name would be socially and psychologically less than a full man". However, though everyone may have a name, not everyone knows the meaning of his/her own. A few give their names much more thought. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the role played by the Rundi pre-Christian names in the country goes beyond the distinctive appellation, as earlier said.

The study of personal names is referred to as anthroponomy. It is related to genealogy, sociology and anthropology. Thus, it falls under the umbrella of onomastics that deals with the study of proper names including their forms and use. In this connection, Ntahombaye (1983: 9) states as follows: "Le nom est un message, il entre dans un processus langagier de communication ». This can be translated as follows: "*The name is a message; it takes part in the language process of communication.*" Ntahombaye (ibid) goes on saying: "*Le nom est un message qui ne se comprend que par référence à l'histoire personnelle du donneur. Ce qu'il traduit est très varié mais on peut détecter néanmoins un dénominateur commun, celui de perpétuer la vie au sein de l'harmonie collective, en manifestant un accord soit positivement, soit en assumant une tension en vue d'un nouvel équilibre*" This can be translated as follows :

> *The name conveys a message which is only understood in reference to the personal history of the giver. What it evokes is varied but one may however get a common view, that of perpetuating life within the collective harmony, manifesting an*

agreement whether positively, or assuming a tension in order to get a new balance.

As for Lyons (1977: 222), he claims that proper names are both synchronically and diachronically motivated. Rymes (1996: 231) emphasizes Lyons' view while pointing out that "*The name of an individual is given as a synchronic meaning in the baptismal ceremony but as the individual uses that name, it acquires new and varied meanings diachronically.*"

When talking about the naming process in the region of Dué Kue, Tiérou (1977: 33) points out that the choice of a name is never hazardous. It is also the case in the Burundian culture during the period under. It is obvious that a name grants a person identity. Yet, giving a name to a child is more than just an act of designation or an official registration: names are not superficial phenomena, but are an expression of cultural identity deeply embedded in sociocultural contexts. Naming is therefore regarded as the social birth of a human being and is frequently carried out in the form of a ritual integration. One example of this is the Christian baptism. In addition to official first names, there are also many informal names, such as nicknames.

Parents express themselves and send a message towards the community or the spirits through the names they give to their children. Thus, naming is influenced by the circumstances and social context. As can be observed, life experience was of paramount importance in the choice of a name during the pre-Christian period. This is to say that the main purpose of a name was to communicate. Parents might choose their children's names on the basis of the message they wanted to convey and the latter was in direct connection with what the parents' neighbourhood was like.

II.1.2. Naming Process

The naming process varies from society to society and from culture to culture. Concerning the importance given to the task of giving a name to a newborn, it is not always done with the same grandeur. In this line, Kidd (1906) states that in some African societies, the naming process require some special ceremonies whereas in others it doesn't. He gives the example of South Africa where in South-west tribes the name is given in an impressive way in a great ceremony presided by the chief. He adds that the child and the mother are isolated since the child's birth. At the feast, the child and the mother are brought before the chief who fills his mouth with water and spits it out over the couple, saying to the ancestral spirits: "A child is born to you: May the Kraal never die".

The above statements give insight into how South-west African societies attach a great importance to the act of naming. In other words, the naming process in the South-West Africa is part of the culture. In fact, their traditional way of naming reflects their belief in the ancestors and their spirits. Like in the traditional Burundi, South-West African communities believe that ancestors have power over them. The reason why, like in the ritual of 'kubandwa' in traditional Burundi, they perform rituals for the sake of ancestors' protection upon them and naming is part of those rituals,

i) In the South-East, on the contrary, there is no special ceremony, Kidd (ibid) adds. The mother pronounces the name when people visit the baby on the day of birth, or it may be pronounced by the father at the feast of purification. Kidd (ibid) goes on saying that there are no ceremonies required in connection with the task. Above all, Kidd (1906:24) distinguishes five main methods according to which names are given. These are the following:

i) The common method consisting in naming a child after a person to compliment him.

Very often, children are named after their grandmother or grandfather.

ii) Very often, children are named after some current events.

iii) The appearance of the child influences very much the naming process. A strong child, a big strapping boy, full of strength and rusty is named after a strong man in fact of fables.

iv) The child may be given a name in accordance with the character it is hoped it may develop.

v) Breaking the ill-spell which has caused the death of several children in succession.

As far as Tooke (1974) is concerned, the naming process in South-Africa is also of the belief that the practices in relation to it vary considerably from group to group. Some groups like the Venda group make elaborate ceremonies as far as the naming process is concerned. He goes on saying that a child is the incarnation of a dead relative and it is particularly important to choose the right name because giving a wrong name means offending the ancestor; illness and misfortune to the child may result. Like the Zulu, the Venda make the name public before a group of people when the child is a few weeks old. But, the name given in infancy is usually changed in two circumstances, i.e. after the initiation ceremonies at puberty, or if the child fails to show steady physical growth (in this case, incorrect naming is diagnosed to be the cause of these misfortunes).

Agyekum (2006: 209), for his part, asserts that names frequently describe the characteristics of the named individuals. This is why people are able to acquire new names, appellations and by-names based on their personal achievements. That is the case of honorific appellations. Furthermore, Kidd (1906), like Tooke

(1974), points out that the South-Sotho and the Zulu commonly name their children after grandparents or important members of their lineage.

Observing the above views, it is quite noticeable that the naming process in South Africa is meaningful and is a vehicle through which social messages are transmitted. This is not the case in France where, after birth, a child takes the family name which has become hereditary, as pointed out by Lebel (1946: 11).

The present work assets that Burundian names in the former times were not arbitrary. They were rather based on socio-cultural context. The pre-Christian naming process in Burundi (like in some other African countries as seen above), was itself done according to the reality in the surrounding environment. Burundian people say "Ntakaburimvo" which means "Everything has a cause". Thus, a child's name was given according to, either the social situation of his/her parents, or the events preceding the child's birth. Consequently, the choice of a name was never random during the pre-Christian times. Names of individuals were sincere expressions of the inner feelings the parents had during the time of birth of the child to be named. That is the reason why all domains of the daily life were expressed through names. Thus, when one needs to know the exact meaning of an indigenous name, he/she has to examine the idea, often hidden, that those who chose it had when they gave it.

II.1.3. Naming Period

In Burundi, the family names did not exist in the pre-Christian period except for kings (Bigangara, 1982: 119). However, the name was not arbitrarily imposed and the naming process followed a certain conception of events and life experience. Indeed, it obeyed cultural orders. With the arrival of missionaries, the system changed. The latter imposed the hereditary patronymic system wherein children necessarily bear their fathers' names.

Unlike in some tribes of South Africa where there are special ceremonies as shown above, the Burundian society does not organize special ceremonies while providing names to newly born babies. In this connection, Nzohabonimana (1968: 5) puts that "seemingly, there are no fixed-up rules, i.e. special ceremonies according to which names are given in Burundi". He goes on arguing that "everything seems to be dictated by circumstances and events preceding, accompanying, or following birth".

Even though Rundi linguists interested in the naming process agree on the fact that the names are dictated by circumstances and events around birth, there is no common agreement on the exact day when a name is to be given. In this light, Ntahombaye (1983: 42) points out that there is neither a precise moment, nor special ceremonies for the child to be named. He adds that the act of assigning a name to a newborn often takes place-traditionally-when it is hoped that the child is likely to grow, i.e. when the child starts to exist, perhaps around two years or when the child can respond to one's call. This is due to the belief that a name is a proof of existence and it makes someone live. For Bigangara (1982: 133), the time when a name is to be given is ten days after birth whereas for Rodegem (1965: 12), it is given eight days after birth. But still, it depends upon the region. Bigangara (ibid) goes on arguing that the time at which a name is to be given has changed with the today's rules obliging parents to register their children at the registry office some days after birth, but with no specified exact day.

Briefly speaking, we can say that the naming process in Burundi is similar to the naming process in other parts of Africa (e.g. South Africa), though with some differences. This is accounted for by the fact that the naming process is not an end in itself, but a means of transmitting messages; the latter being dictated by circumstances in which a child was born. Indeed, the newborn is given a name some days after birth.

II.1.4. Denotative Vs Connotative Name Meanings

Beyond its 'literal' meaning (its denotation), a particular word may have connotations. People's names, like other words, carry objective or denotative meanings that are agreed upon by a community and are held in the common mind of the community. Names, words and other forms of communication also carry connotative meanings.

According to Panofsky (1970: 50), the denotation of a representational visual image is what all viewers from any culture and at any time would recognize as depicting. Whereas the term 'denotation' is used to refer to the literal or surface meaning expressed by the lexical items, 'connotation' is used to refer to the socio-cultural and/or 'personal' associations -ideological, emotional etc.- of a word or name. Connotations are typically related to the interpreter's class, age, gender, ethnicity, and so on. As for Leech (1981), a word may refer to the object it represents conceptually or its referent, which is its literal meaning or denotation. He goes on saying that the same word may also refer to many other figurative associations, which may be its connotations.

Unlike most researchers, Barthes (1974: 9) does not see any great difference between the denotative and connotative meanings which words can have.
He puts:

> *Denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature. Connotation, in short, produces the illusion of*

> *denotation, the illusion of language as transparent and of the signifier and the signified as being identical.*

From the above quotation, it is obvious that the denotative and connotative meanings of a word or name vary to some extent. Barthes' (ibid) views obviates that even though denotation is mostly believed to be the literal or original meaning, it never represents effectively the thing it refers to. In other words, the thing represented by the lexical items is never identical to them. Indeed, as the connotative meanings of a word or name may vary in different contexts, so does the denotative meaning.

Likewise, Voloshinov (1973: 105) insists that there is "no strict division can be made between denotation and connotation because 'referential meaning is moulded by evaluation... meaning is always permeated with value judgement".

The above views imply that the denotative and connotative meanings are not always the same. Barthes (1974) and Voloshinov (1973) assume that all depends on who is judging. Thus, the appreciation of what a word really means requires certain knowledge about the socio-cultural environment in which the word appears. In this respect, Barnard (1996: 83) states that "The denotative meaning of a sign would be broadly agreed upon by members of the same culture, whereas nobody is ever taken to task because their connotations are incorrect, so no inventory of the connotative meanings generated by any sign could ever be complete". Thus, certain connotations would be widely recognized within a culture.

II.1.5. Actors Involved in the Naming Process

We have said that in the pre-modern period, the name given to the newborn was almost always pregnant with messages towards the environment surrounding the parents. In the period under study, each name was given objectively according to

the message which was to be delivered. Thus, it is worthwhile to see who participated in this process.

Rodegem (1965: 18) states that the father is the one who must give the name, given the authority held by the father in the pre-Christian period. However, in the absence of the father, it is normal that the mother, grandparents, brothers and sisters give a name to the child. Therefore, one may conclude from the above that the actors involved in the Rundi pre-Christian naming process were the parents in general and the social environment in particular.

Actors involved in the act of naming during the pre-Christian period were and are still numerous. According to Simbananiye (2005:170), "La nomination est un acte qui nécessite la présence de l'autre» which can be translated as «Naming is an act that entails the presence of the other ». The other, in this case, is not definite; it can represent any person in the social realm. Simbananiye (2005:172) goes on stating that "le nom burundais est un message qui met en relation trois "instances" concernées par l'acte de nomination à savoir: l'instance qui nomme, l'instance destinataire du message et l'instance représentée par la personne nommée», which can be translated as follows: «The Burundian name is a message which puts in relation three instances: the instance that names, the instance to which the message is sent and the instance represented by the named person». Likewise, Tonkin (1980:653) points out that many African naming systems are elaborated to the point that the name is a message, not to the child but to others.

Nevertheless, though names frequently describe the characteristics of the named individual or his/her surroundings, people may acquire new names and appellations based on their personal achievements. In other words, in addition to the names provided by parents and families at birth, people gain more and more

other names as they grow up. Such names may be given by classmates, friends, colleagues, peers, etc. in relation to the individuals' behaviour; their sense of humour, their social and professional functions, their bravery, etc.

It is worth mentioning, at this juncture, that the indigenous names were chosen in accordance with the environment, for the purpose of conveying and communicating various messages, not only to the named person, but also to his surroundings. Thus, various actors namely: parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends, and the social environment were involved in the Rundi pre-modern naming process.

II.1.6. Naming and Superstition

In Africa as in the rest of the world, the birth of a child is an event of great joy and significance. Much importance is attached to the naming of the child. The hope of the parents, current events of importance and celestial events that may have attended the birth are all given consideration in naming the child. Indeed, it is believed that the name chosen will exert an influence for better or for worse on the life of the child and on the family as well. Names, thus, express some sort of expectation or aspiration from the name givers to the child. It is often direct and clear, at other times subtle and shrouded.

As defined in the Oxford *Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English*, superstition is, on the one hand, the belief that particular events happen in a way that cannot be explained by reason or science. On the other hand, it is the belief that particular events bring good or bad luck. In the pre-modern Burundian society, for instance, there used to be superstition according to which when a child killed a frog, his/her mother's breasts would get cut. It was also believed that when somebody swept during the night it might bring misfortune, etc.

As far as names are concerned, Burundians believed that the name a child is given may attract or repulse misfortune upon him. This was essentially due to the fear they had in front of death, the reason why minimizing names were chosen so as to disinterest death.

One of the classic pieces of research on the relationship between names and behavior was conducted in Africa by G. Jahoda (1954) of University College of the Gold Coast. In discussions with teachers and social workers on the formation of character in young people, Jahoda (ibid.) discovered that the people he was working with--all of whom were Ashanti--sincerely believed that the day of the week on which a person was born has a lot to do with the kind of character traits and behavior the person will show throughout life. Specifically, Jahoda learned that the Ashanti believe that boys who are born on Monday will be mild mannered and peace loving whereas those born on Wednesday will be violent and aggressive. For his part, Christopher (1979:24) points out in *The Name Game,* that Monday's child is fair of face whereas Tuesday's child is full of grace. He goes on arguing that Wednesday's child is full of woe, Thursday's child has far to go, Friday's child is loving and giving, whereas Saturday's child works hard for a living. He also puts that the child born on the Sabbath day is bonny, blithe, good and gay.

Even though this superstition may be widespread, the point that aroused Jahoda's (1954) curiosity about the Ashanti version of it was the fact that some of the best educated and most sophisticated members of the Ashanti community were so convinced that it was true that they were willing to use the idea in serious academic discussion to explain how character develops. Apparently, they had seen enough evidence of how people born on Monday and Wednesday behaved to convince them that the superstition was factual.

When he looked into the matter further, Jahoda (ibid.) learned that the Ashanti were keenly aware of the day of the week they were born on because one of their customs dictated that the day name has to be included in the person's name, along with any other names given at birth. Thus, Ashanti boys born on Monday or Wednesday knew they were born on one of those days because the Ashanti equivalent of Monday or Wednesday was part of their names. Indeed, unlike most people who are either unaware of the day of the week of their birth or unconcerned about it, the Ashanti had the information constantly called to their attention.

By itself, the superstition that the day of the week of a person's birth has some sort of magical power over the person is not at all common around the world. However, societies may have a popular nursery rhyme in their own cultures that expresses more or less the same idea. In the Burundian culture, for instance, there was no such superstition regarding the day on which a child was born. Even nowadays, days are especially embedded in Christian names of children born on specific days in the life of the Church. Those names include, among others, 'Emmanuel (la)', 'Noël (la)', etc. (Names of children born on Christmas Day), 'Pcifique', 'Pasacal (ine)', 'Pascasie', etc. (Names of children born on Easter Day), 'Toussaint' (A child born on the day dedicated to all saints in the Catholic Church), and so on. Those names, however, do not have specific connotations as to how a child will behave.

The names parents chose for their children often reflected the relationship between name and identity as put earlier. This was particularly true of the names of twins, for whom the establishment of a unique identity is often difficult. Parents often considered twins as mysterious children. They tended to think of twins as a single person who happened to have two bodies, and they often chose names for them that reinforce the idea that they have a single shared identity.

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Robert Plank (1964:69), who studied names of twins, discovered that the most common pattern was the use of names that begin with the same letter. Those included such names as Richard and Robert (Ricky and Robby), Joseph and Judith (Joey and Judy), Louise and Louisa, as well as such names as Paul and Paula and Patrick and Patricia. The second pattern involved names that had different first letters but similar in sound, rhythm, or rhyme.

Indeed, identical twins, who are always of the same sex and who look so much alike, people have trouble telling them apart, far worse than fraternal twins in the similarity of their names. For, as Plank (ibid.) found out, most identical twins had similar names compared to the fraternal. The point of all of this is not that parents of twins are vindictive toward their children and purposely give them names that will confuse other people. Instead, the point is that the parents instinctively feel that their twins share an identity and hence should share a name

Likewise, in our Burundian society, twins and children born after them were not considered as others in the naming process. There was a superstition that twins were not ordinary persons. They were considered sacred and were marginalized. Unlike other children, the ceremonies of naming twins were so special and accompanied by various rituals and incantation. The ritual of 'Kubandwa" which was performed on special days was to be performed so as to call for the ancestors' protection over such "particular" children. Besides, Burundians were convinced that, if such rituals were not performed, twins should either have mental problems or die. Otherwise, they should develop bizarre behaviour that would disadvantage them and the whole family.

Twins have particular names like **'Bukuru'** (The twin born first), **'Butoyi'** (The twin born second), **'Ciza'** (The first born after twins), **'Nkurikiye'** (The second

born after twins), **'Congera'** (The third born after twins), etc. The names 'Bukuru' and 'Butoyi' embed the idea of single identity of twins reflected in Plank's (1964) study cited above. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that there is no distinction between males and females as far as these names are concerned.

Superstition also resides in the fact that Burundians believe that the name affects the behaviour of the child. They are convinced that uttering a speech act is part of performing the act. Thus, people should be careful while choosing names for their children since the former may build or destroy the child's personality. Indeed, people may love or hate you just because of your name, for, by hearing one's name; people may create a mental image of who the person really is. This is reflected in the Kirundi saying that "Izina ni ryo muntu" (A name reflects its bearer).

II.2. Classification of Rundi pre-Christian names

A considerable number of linguists have written about Rundi names. However, there is no common classification of the types that are distinguished so far. In fact, some of them have made a clear classification. The ways they have dealt with names are related only to some aspects. To illustrate this, Nzohabonimana (1968: 5) has been interested in names concerned with human relationships, death and human values, such as military achievements. He has also been interested in names dealing with hatred, personal feelings, solitude and irony.

Micomibi (1982: 25), for his part, has been interested in the names in relation with animals. He states that "Les noms d'animaux donnés aux personnes ont pour but d'éloigner 'Dame Mort' afin que celle-ci ne s'intéresse à 'un rien', car le «butin» n'en vaut pas la peine", which can be translated as follows: "Animal

names given to persons aim at moving away 'Lady Death' so that this one despises the 'nothing' because the booty is not worthy". Micomibi (ibid) gives the examples of "Semuswi" which means "chicken". He says, for instance, that "Inambeba" which means "rat" is given to a child so that death may not take him. A rat is a small animal which cannot constitute a complete meal for the animal which takes it. Thus, the death may not dare taking a child who bears such a kind of name.

Names such as Kanyoni (small bird), Kanuma (small dove), kabwa (small dog), Kabwebwe (small jackal), Kanyegeri (small ant), Gakwavu (small rabbit), Gahene (small goat), Gatama (small sheep), etc. are names related to animals. In addition, there is in them an idea of smallness in order to discourage death.

It is obvious that someone who does not know about the Burundian culture of the period may say that these are bad names. But on the contrary, all culture depends on what in which people believe.

Zuure (1932: 175-179) at his turn puts emphasis on different types of death as reflected in the minds of Burundians, though they do not know how to define it. Here are the aspects he has raised:

1) Death has no pity, no respect, no forgiveness; it attacks any person regardless of his richness, his wisdom, his socio-economic rank, his age, etc.
2) Death has an unprecedented greediness, i.e. it is never satisfied, always hungry and ready to eat whatever is within its reach without any prior selection.
3) Death is always impatient, i.e. death has no rest; it keeps on taking people.
4) Death is extremely jealous.

All these aspects evoked about death push Burundians to choose names in an attempt to discourage it. Zuure (ibid) goes on arguing that, in addition to the names given to express attitudes about death, there are also names given to create death's contempt vis-à-vis the children so as not to take them. The so-called unpleasant names are then chosen to this end.

Writers who deal with nowadays' names distinguish between bad and good names. Names which are associated with negative attributes are said to be bad ones. It is the reason why today's names are mostly names which have good connotations. Good names are said to be those with positive attributes and are given to children to beg the spirits or gods to take care of them.

For Gakwavu (1968: 13), names reveal the spirit of the Burundian, who considers himself as an honourable man, characterized by courage and bravery. As he wants to see his values and merits greatly acknowledged, the names he chooses express wishes, military glories, and eulogies.

There are still other important researchers who have tried to classify Rundi names. These are Rodegem (1965), Bigangara (1982) and Ntahombaye (1983). According to Rodegem, the following types of Rundi proper names are distinguished:

1° Obliged names: these are names referring to the order of the children in their birth and those of the children born after twins;

2° Descriptive names: these are names describing the pregnancy conditions or the special difficulties of the mother during the pregnancy;

3° Names related to birth conditions: these are names related to the physical traits of the child at birth, the place, or the moment of birth;

4° Allusive names: these are names given to stress their misery and poverty in order not to attract misfortune on them;

5° Names related to God: these are names expressing the way Burundians view God, i.e. their attitudes vis-à-vis Him; 6° Names related to death: these are names that show that Burundians are afraid that death can take their children. In this category, the following types are distinguished:

a) Repulsive names: these are names chosen in order not to attract death's attention on their children
b) Minimizing names aiming at misleading death
c) Names of animals, with the same objective as the above
d) Names of things, still with the aim of misleading death

7° Names related to the neighbourhood: these are names that describe the relationship of the family and the environment. The following sub-categories fall within this type:

a) Unsympathetic names: these reveal the quarrels that may be observed in the family.
b) Sad names: they express how Burundians feel sad when they do not live in good terms with their neighbours.
c) Names related to jealousy: these names express a bad relationship; for instance, someone living among his enemies.
d) Names related to calumny: these are misanthropic names based on experience.
e) Names related to hatred: observable in the neighbourhood.

8° Anecdotic names: these names make a summary of external family circumstances in just one word.

9° Names portraying the life of the couple.

Almost the same types are distinguished by Bigangara (1982) but with a quite different classification in some subcategories. These are:

i. Obliged names that he defines as Rodegem (1965)
ii. Descriptive names, among which he distinguishes names in relation to the physical traits of the child, those describing parents' psychological

preoccupations, those related to the circumstances of birth, those describing the neighbourhood relationships, those related to historical events, and those related to family events such as settlement in a new place.

iii. Names alluding to misery in one's life. He defines them just like Rodegem (1965)

For Ntahombaye (1983), Rundi proper names may be classified as follows:

- *Title names*: in this category, he distinguishes four different subcategories. The first comprises names associated with kings in the order of succession in their quaternary cycle, to begin with Ntare (lion) to Mwambutsa (who helps to cross through), Mwezi (moon) and Mutaga (daytime). The second comprises names related to one's function at the king's court, as many people who were there had appropriate names with regard to the activity carried out. The third category comprises names related to religious sects, while the fourth comprises those related to professional activities, the latter being dictated by fame.
- *Names related to childhood and sex*: for him, these names are signs of laziness on the part of the one who gives the name. In his mind he does not like to provide to his child a name fearing to attract death's attention on him. Such names include those announcing the sex of the child and those showing a progressive integration of the child in the society, as well as those related to the functions one is able to carry out and which are related to sex.
- *Names related to physical traits*: these names describe particular physical aspects observable at birth or all along the growth. For the latter case, it tends to be more a nickname than a name and it results from the observation of a distinctive character. Parts of the body

from feet to head (strong or fragile), height (tall or short), colour (black or brown), behaviour (the way one walks, attitudes), as well as beauty or ugliness, are the important elements reflected in them.

- *Names related to one's character*: they reflect such characters as greediness, manners, laziness, difficult or quiet behaviour, and presence or absence of an active spirit in the bearer of the name.
- *Names related to bravery*: under this category fall the names related to military achievements, to the arts of fighting, and the names of the troops.

When given to children, names related to military achievements express a wish, an idea assigned to the child by the father, to match or supersede the qualities embedded in them. Those related to the art of fighting aim at creating in the child the spirit of never fearing in front of the enemy, while the names of the troops are given to instil in the child the bravery associated with them.

- *Names related to events*: such names recall a number of circumstances experienced by the mother or the father or the neighbours during pregnancy or birth, and which have marked them. In other words, these names recall historical, cultural, socio-political and economic events, or agricultural and domestic activities. They may also recall the place of birth, the atmospheric conditions at birth, a new settlement, pregnancy conditions, birth particularities or birth following death.
- *Names related to growth*: these names are given to stimulate growth. They include names of things, those minimizing and even demeaning the child, those expressing disinterest and those alluding directly to death.

The aim of such names is to create death's disinterest in the child. In this way, people believe death will not come to take the child and

thus, the child will grow up. This view matches with what Rodegem (1965: 9-10) states in the following terms:

L'intention des parents n'est pas d'affubler leur enfant d'un nom comique, bizarre, biscornu, mais bien détourner la mort, camoufler la vie, empêcher l'enfant d'être victime comme ses frères

This can be translated as follows:

The intention of parents is not to attach to their child an amusing, funny, peculiar name, it is rather to ward off death so as to cover up life and then prevent the child from being a victim of death as his brothers.

- *Names related to relationships that characterize the people living in the neighbourhood.* Among these, Ntahombaye (ibid) distinguishes positive and negative ones, i.e. those expressing positive and negative relationships observable in the environment.

Briefly speaking, we can say that, though the above critics have been interested in the Rundi proper names, they haven't yet come to a common agreement on how to classify them. The only two who have tried to make a clear classification are Rodegem (1968) and Ntahombaye (1983); the latter seeming to have made a more detailed classification than the former.

II.3. The Socio-cultural Aspect of Rundi Names

A name has a great importance in the Burundian tradition as it does in many others. Therefore, a name given to a child has a particular message it delivers, either to the child himself, or to the environment surrounding him. A name can be given to a child so as to develop a certain character in him.

In this connection, Zawawi (1993: 6) points out that "a name constructs a person because the name one bears may create an attitude in those who hear it before they meet the name bearer". Fredge (1949) also considers names to have attributes and therefore to be attached to referents. In effect, people expect in the inherent power of words in names to reflect the lives of people either positively or negatively. Therefore, the individual's name is of concern to the society as a whole. As for Simonsen (1994), "C'est par le nom que l'être biologique devient un être social » which can be translated as follows: "It is by the name that a biological being becomes a social being". Such a statement entails that a name has an integrative function as far as a person as a social being is concerned. In this connection, Ogawa (1992:23) puts: "*A person comes into existence for the first time when he is given a personal name. In some societies, if a person dies before receiving a name, he or she is considered to have never lived and no funeral is held*". This highlights the idea that the individual does not exist in the social world until he/she is given a name.

In the Burundian culture, like in many other cultures, people expect a child named after a dignitary, a chief or a hero to behave properly so that nobody makes derogatory remarks about the name in attempt to denigrate it. It is for the same reasons that children named after grandparents, parents and chiefs are addressed accordingly. Such children are, indeed, advised to behave well so as to avoid tarnishing their names. In such cases, names are meant to shape the children's upbringing, behaviour and socialization.

As for Baziruwisabiye (1994:5), the Kirundi folklore is full of anecdotes that demonstrate the importance that Kirundi speakers attach to the names that people are given at birth. For instance, when people meet after a long time without seeing each other, they hug and exchange a number of wishes through greetings, among them the utterance "Gira izina" meaning "Have a name".

Biziruwisabiye (ibid) goes on arguing that the expression "Gira izina" (Have a name) does not simply mean to be called so and so; it rather means to be known as X who has accomplished something great, i.e. be famous. In other words, it is a wish of good things towards the bearer of the name. As for Banderembako (1968: 4), a name is the reality about the person rather than being a simple label.

Talking about the naming process in France, Lebel (1946: 11) states that, proper names have become hereditary. Subsequently, they have lost meaning and are thus simple labels without any link with the physical appearance, the moral character, or the circumstances of birth. That is not the case for the Rundi pre-Christian names. The latter are not simple labels that are born by children. In this respect, I share Zuure's (1932: 64) belief according to which Burundians can provide explanation following name giving because, unlike Europeans, they never make use of a proper name without meaning.

In most cases, pre-Christian names have connotative meanings. In order to understand the connotative meaning of a name, one has to go beyond the literal meaning, what Zgusta (1976: 856) describes as consisting of all components of lexical meaning to add some contrastive value to the basic, usually designative function. Thus, in Burundi, proper names are always given in accordance with a particular reason in the minds of the parents and their surrounding.

In the preceding section, different types of Rundi proper names as discussed by different linguists are identified. They all reflect a number of aspects in relation to the Burundians' social life. Indeed, through pre-Christian names, there is a message parents communicate; a kind of social relationships among Burundians, the kind of activities they carry out, their expectations or wishes to the newborn baby, the circumstances in which the baby is born, the way the baby looks at the moment of birth, to name but a few. In this respect, Baziruwisabiye (1994: 53)

points out that, according to her informants, there are no negative name. She goes on stating that each name refers to a given situation or circumstance. She adds that, as life is made of both good and bad things, names are also expressed in a way of communicating feelings of joy or pain. Still, the naming process contains such ideas as beauty, ugliness, neighbourhood relationships, climate, gossip, husband and wife relationships, the condition of birth, etc. Therefore, as names are not just labels, but given to convey something,

II.4. Rundi Names' Social Functions

As seen in the preceding sections, Rundi pre-Christian names get their meanings through the message they convey. Thereby, they may be referred to as mirrors of the social realities. Thus, through what they reflect, they fulfil a number of functions.

Bigangara (1982: 119) distinguishes for proper names in Burundi a double function. The first is to make reference to the person, i.e. to distinguish the individual from his fellows; a belief also shared by Rodegem (1965: 61). The second is to locate his origin, his coming in the world and sometimes his probable future in family and national events in their relationship with God, the Supreme Being and source of life.

In fact, Bigangara (ibid) distinguishes a number of functions that can be associated with proper names, the most important being: identifying, calling upon, referential, commemorative, setting upon one's mettle, integrative, and propitiatory.

Identifying and calling upon functions are embedded in names serving at identifying a person from all that is different from him so that he feels actually

and exactly solicited without anybody else feeling so in his place or with him. As far as the referential function is concerned, it results in the idea that a name refers to the message the parents want to transmit.

With regard to the commemorative function, it is worth noting that a good number of names are chosen for their symbolic features. They are evocative of social facts and events. The role of such names is to commemorate the events they refer to and thus fix them in the memory of the bearer and his contemporaries.

Other functions that can be distinguished through names are those of setting up one's mettle and the integrative one. In fact, when a commemorative name refers to an act of bravery or to another human quality, the bearer feels that he has to deserve such a quality; his parents as well. This function generates initiatives and creativity on the behalf of the bearer.

Other names, especially those related to clan or cardinal names, such as "Nyandwi" (The seventh child), "Minani"(The eighth child), "Bucumi" (The tenth child), etc. aim at integrating the bearer in the lineage, in the clan of which the name exalts the quality. These two functions are thus characteristic of all the appreciative or enumerative names.

Names can also bear proprietary or incantatory functions. The latter is embedded in all the names aiming at kicking away or at escaping from the danger -be it individual or social- that prevails at the moment a baby is given a name. This is achieved thanks to the incantatory techniques –of minimising and annihilating the child- that create death's disinterest in the child. As for the former, all the names related to God, to a mullet and sacred animals fulfil such a function. They

seem to bring to the bearer virtues auspicious and favourable to long life and social success.

In a nutshell, it is noticeable that Rundi proper names have a number of functions they fulfil, most of which being social as names are vehicles through which social messages are conveyed.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The present chapter aims at discussing the methods by which data were collected and analyzed. Indeed, the population from which the data were collected and how it was chosen will be described under this section.

III.1. Population

As the present study aims at bringing out the messages embedded in the Rundi pre-Christian names, the target population comprises people whose children or who themselves bear such names whose meanings are not apparent from their lexical constituents. It is obvious that people bearing such names might be so many that I couldn't reach them all. Thus, I preferred to limit my research to students enrolled in the Lake Tanganyika University during the 2008-2009 academic year.

The choice of such a population was not random. In fact, the Lake Tanganyika University, like other universities, comprises students from different corners of the country. Besides, a good number of the evening classes' students are relatively old (above 30years) and then, they are likely to bear such indigenous names. Moreover, there are many parents among them who could provide me with information about how they make choices of their children's names. Consequently, the sample selected from such a population was likely to be effectively representative. Indeed, being students of the Social Communication Faculty, they constitute a population that is likely to decipher the meanings or messages encoded through their names or their children's and give their explanations accordingly.

III.2. Sampling Technique

Ideally, the names of the whole population should have been grasped. However, having access to each student seemed not easy. That is why I chose to work with the students of the Social Communication Faculty. The reason behind this is that, given the basic notions such students already have as far as communication is concerned, they are likely to decode the messages conveyed through their names better than students from other faculties. Besides, such a sample comprised many parents especially the students who were attending evening classes who have chosen a name at least once. Thus, they were able to explain on which basis they chose their children's names.

As far as the sampling technique is concerned, the simple random sampling method was preferred since every member of the population was a potential informant. To get my sample, I read through the lists of students of different classes of the Social Communication Faculty and picked up some pre-Christian names. In fact, out of a population of 345 students, one student was to be chosen among every three. My sample was then narrowed down to 115 students. Finally, it is from that category that names related to the topic under study were selected. It is worth mentioning that names which are related to God, especially those ending in the suffix –Imana, were not taken into account just because the concept of –Imana comes with the arrival of colonizers in the country. So, a number of 42 names were only considered.

III.3. Data Collection Techniques

In the task of collecting data, the idea of Ntabona (1985: 221) guided me. According to Ntabona (ibid), the method in the collection of data is dependent on the aim of the study in question.While collecting data for the present study,

the questionnaire was chosen among many other techniques to gather the necessary information. The main questions put to the informants are subdivided into two main categories. The first category of questions was addressed to parents as namegivers and the second to the individuals as name bearers. Both adults and youth were involved.

III.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The present section discusses the procedures by which collected data had been analyzed. The first step consisted in gathering names whose meanings are closer. Names were subdivided into different categories taking into account the conditions in which the individual's parents were at the time of birth, the event prevailing in the country or in the surrounding when the person was born, the individual's birth order, etc.

Such names were thereafter analysed taking into account different linguistic levels of analysis such as the morphological, semantic and stylistic levels, among others. At the semantic level especially, the analysis consisted in comparing the surface (denotative) and deep (connotative) meanings and thus bringing out the hidden messages often embedded into pre-Christian names and the context in which they appear.

The names were also translated in English. However, most names required paraphrasing since they couldn't find counterparts in the English Language lexicon.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The ultimate aim of the present work being to give the sociocultural prerequisites for understanding the Rundi nomenclature, collected data will be analysed focussing mostly on their social and cultural aspects. In fact, the Burundians' belief about supernatural power, their customs and philosophy will be brought out under this section.

IV. 1. Data Analysis

IV. 1. 1. Sociocultural Context of Rundi Names

Naming can be considered as a universal cultural practice. Every society in the world gives names as tags to its people. However, how the names are given, the practices and rituals involved and the interpretations attached to the names differ from society to society and from one culture to another. Thus, as earlier indicated, names are not arbitrary labels. They rather have socio-cultural functions and meanings. In other words, there is a strong interface between people's names and their cultural practices. Names are, therefore, tools through which thoughts, cognition, beliefs and experiences are articulated.

In Africa as in the rest of the world, the birth of a child is an event of great joy and significance. Much importance is attached to the naming of the child. The hope of the parents, current events of importance and celestial events that may have attended the birth are all given consideration in naming the child. Indeed, it is believed that the name chosen will exert an influence for better or for worse on the life of the child and on the family as well. Names, thus, express some sort of expectation or aspiration from the name givers to the child. It is often direct and clear, but at other times, subtle and shrouded.

A common manifestation is a name that reflects a good or positive human quality or attribute. Pertinent examples from the collected data are the names '**Muvunyi**' (Helper), '**Nyenyeri**' (Star), '**Mugisha**' (Blessing), '**Mucomwiza**' (Good manner), etc.

To the question to know if the informants bear the father's name, a number of 27 informants bear the father's name and they did not provide us a clear explanation of what they mean. As my informants pointed out, they neither asked their parents anything about their names, nor did their parents tell them anything about them. However, the informants were convinced that parents wanted to send them best wishes and of course, their names have a positive impact on them. In the name '**Muvunyi**', for instance, parents wish that their child should help them as he grows up. As far as the name '**Nyenyeri**' is concerned, there is in it the idea of shining and bringing light. This name reflects the parents' wish that their child should be a model in the society. Concerning the name 'Mugisha', parents wish that blessings should be, either upon the child, or upon themselves through the child. The name '**Mucomwiza**', for its part, expresses the parents' wish that their child should behave well. The parents obviously wish that their children will one day exhibit this particular character trait. Parents believe a child, while growing up, may fulfill their wishes and expectations or, by some stroke of luck, may naturally exhibit that characteristic. Such names reflect what is normally expected from the child or wishes towards him by the parents in particular, and by the society as a whole. They embed qualities that are commonly believed to be good in the Burundian culture. Thus, while choosing a name, meaning is one important aspect to consider. The meanings attached to our names may be often highly significant at the time when a particular word is first used to name a human being. As time goes on, however, and more people are given that same name, the original meaning may become watered down, or lost altogether. As a result, the answer to the question,

"What does my name mean?" may become muddier, and harder to pin down. The names '**Nduwingoma**', '**Karorero**' and '**Buregeya**' whose bearers were given their fathers' names are pertinent examples, among others, to substantiate this.

Trying to decompose the name '**Nduwingoma**', we find the following main constituent parts: **Ndi /n-ri/** (I am), **uwa** (a conjunction showing possession or belonging) and **Ingoma** (which traditionally connotes the throne). Normally, when Burundians said "Urya muntu ni uwo mu nda y'ingoma", they implied that the person belonged to the lineage of kings; which is not the case in the present work as pointed out by my informant who is himself the bearer of the name. Thus, if a person who is not a descendant of kings bears such a name, it becomes meaningless and absurd.

It is the same for the name **'Karorero'** which means model. If the bearer of such a name behaves badly or does not show any good example in his social environment, such a name immediately loses its meaning.

As for the name '**Buregeya**' (which is normally used to refer to a person with an additional finger), it is given to the son of Buregeya who has no additional finger; the reason why the original meaning of the name is altered. In fact, a name loses its real meaning and becomes somehow strange mostly when parents want to name a child after his father or grandfather or after a person with qualities quite different from his or hers.

The present section discusses the typology of the pre-Christian Rundi names. In fact, Burundians of the pre-Christian period attached much importance to names and naming practices. The knowledge about indigenous names gives an insight into the Burundian culture and philosophy. The symbolic nature and

interpretation of indigenous names depict the Burundians' beliefs and their social environment. Among those are family names, circumstantial names, day names, achievement names, bodily structure names, proverbial names, etc. They may depict the social relationships in the parents' neighbourhood, the parents' conditions at the child's birth, the physical appearance of the named person, the day on which the baby was born, the parents' expectation towards their child, the mother's condition during the pregnancy, the birth order, etc. Burundian names are, indeed, culture specific.

The name **'Nayinkamiye'** reflects the circumstances in which the child was born as the name bearer put. The name bearer was the third child whose elder brother and sister both died at the early age. There is in the name above the word '**Amata**' (Milk) which is a precious thing in Burundian society and thereby, the name shows how the child was precious to her parents. There is also the act of '**Gukama**' (fetching milk from a cow) in it. Through the name, the act of 'Gukama' is done by somebody else for the sake of milk in favour of the child's parents. This name is very significant. The hidden meaning embedded in it is that the child was born at the time when her parents were hopeless because of the death of children born before. Furthermore, it shows the parallelism between children and milk in Burundian society. In effect, as a child was not a simple thing in the traditional Burundi, so was not milk. This can be seen in the terms '**Gufata neza (abantu, ibintu) nk'amata y'abashitsi**' which means 'to take care of something or somebody with much attention'. The term shows the value given to milk in the Burundian culture.

There is also the idea of 'Imana' (the supreme creature) which comes to emphasize that the child was a supernatural miracle. This shows that, though Burundian indigenous are believed to be pagans, they had a certain belief that

there is a supernatural being called 'Imana'- though it may differ from person to person- and that was the giver of everything.

IV. 1. 2. The Psychological Impact of a Name

The power of a name is as ancient as naming. Names are believed to have the power to destroy or bring great rewards. In choosing a name today, parents rarely consider the weight that used to be associated with this task.

The sense of personal identity and uniqueness that a name gives us is at the heart of why names interest us and why they are important to us as individuals and to our society as a whole. However, in spite of their importance, most people know very little about their names and the effects they have on us and on our children in everyday life. In a very real sense, we are consumers of names, and we have a need and right to know about the psychological and magical aspects of our names. The most important aspect of personality affected by names is self-concept. Self-concept develops as children develop, and it is learned from the verbal and non-verbal significant messages people in children's lives send them. Parents are the most important message-senders, but, as children mature and become more and more independent, the messages of teachers, classmates, and other people; all contribute to their developing concepts of self. In a sense, self-concept works as a kind of script for the way people act. If a boy has an image of himself as bad or as not capable of doing well in school, his behavior will probably reflect that image. He will tend to behave the way he thinks a bad boy is supposed to behave, or he will fail to learn as he should even though he might be quite intelligent.

A name like **'Goyigoyi'** (Weak), for instance, can make its bearer feel ridiculous when such a name is pronounced. That is what happened to my informant who

sometimes felt unhappy when he was so called, though the name depicts his physical traits. The name had an impact on him in different ways. On the one hand, he was always struggling to show his peers that he is not weak as they may think. Thus, he was often engaged in fights against them. On the other hand, he was hopeless that the name can have negative impact and make him really weak that he cannot do well in everyday life. The name 'Goyigoyi' may therefore develop idleness in its bearer.

On the contrary, a child named **'Ntwari'** (Brave) or **'Baringuvu'** (They are strong) is likely to develop a strong personality and do better than he could actually do. As my informants pointed out, their parents wanted to plant in them the quality of being brave since the very early age. My informants also said that the names had an impact on them since they generated self- esteem that they were really brave.

Nevertheless, a name with a positive connotation may influence its bearer negatively whereas the one with a negative connotation does so positively. This may happen when, for instance, the bearer of the name with positive connotation like '**Ntwari'** develops idleness and does not make any effort pretending that he already possesses the quality expressed by the name. The person named '**Goyigoyi'** may, for his part, refute the quality expressed by the name. Instead, he may make extra efforts to challenge the name.

A person's name has an impact on the process of building a self-concept because the name helps determine the messages other people send to the child. It has been well established through research that certain names are generally considered desirable in some culture and have positive feelings associated with them as previously seen. It is also well established that other names are looked upon as being undesirable and carry negative associations. For example, Curt,

David, Diane, Jeff, Judy, and Linda are all considered desirable and positive, and Agatha, Edgar, Francis, Mabel, Marvin, and Phoebe all provoke the opposite reaction (See Anderson (1979), Chapter 10). Because of this, people unconsciously, but nevertheless effectively, send positive and negative messages in keeping with positive and negative images.

Most of the time these messages are very subtle, but sometimes they take the form of jokes, teasing, and even ridicule, especially within the child's peer group. At best, the joking and teasing can make children self-conscious about their names and reluctant to have any contact with other children out of fear of being ridiculed. At worst, especially when insensitive adults think the jokes and nicknames are funny and actually use them too, it can undermine what might otherwise be healthy personalities. The names**'(a) Kabaka'** (A small wild cat) and **'(a) Gahungu'** (a small boy), for example, are pejorative in their literal meanings and may undermine their bearers in one way or another. As far as the name 'Kabaka' is concerned, its bearer still ignores why his parents chose this name. Nevertheless, he assures that he was not proud of it and was afraid to tell people that name because he feared he would be laughed at. Anytime he was obliged to pronounce it, it was a hard time for him. He wondered why his parents assimilated him with a cat. But as he grew up, he got accustomed to it. Thus, though we have earlier mentioned that the parents have good intentions while giving their child a name, it is obvious that some names may make the child feel ashamed and even hate the parents who named him/her after it. In light of the important link between names and self-concept, it is not surprising that investigators have found relationships between names and the tendency toward mental illness. In four separate studies conducted over a twenty-year period, researchers found decided tendencies toward psychosis and neurosis among people with unusual and uncommon first names (Hartman, et al. (1968); Ellis and Beechley (1954); Houston and Sumner (1948); and Savage and Wells

(1948)). Interestingly, the tendency seemed stronger among boys and men than among girls and women. That is due to the fact that there is greater flexibility and freedom in the names of females than of males (Ellis and Beechley (ibid.)). Girls are given unusual names much more often than boys are. Therefore, these names do not attract as much attention and are less likely to cause embarrassment for the girls who have them. As a result, these names do less damage to the self-concepts of the girls as they develop during childhood and adolescence.

In fact, girls are often named after their beauty or given names expressing the parent's wish towards their daughter to create an image of beauty or sympathy in her. Thus, names such as **'Keza'** (Beautiful), **'Kaneza'** (Joyful), **'(u) Munezero'**, (Happiness), etc. are frequently given to girls. Moreover, Burundian parents try to create in their daughters an image of hospitality as a future mother given the latter's place in the society. This is reflected in names such as **'Karire'** (from 'icarire', grasses on which cows sleep). This implies that a girl must be humble, hospitable, and soft. The name **'Mucomwiza'** (Good behaviour) also expresses the wish for the girl to behave well. As the bearers of the above names pointed out, they were not concerned about the meanings of their names as they realized they are positive and sounded good to them. Indeed, all the above names are generally female and intend to create a certain mental image in the girl in accordance with how she is considered in the society.

Even though research data consistently show a relationship between names and personality difficulties, bizarre and highly unusual names of children may be, in themselves, no more than indicators of the psychological states of parents. Though it has been earlier mentioned that parents are the most important message-senders in the development of a child's self-concept and personality, peculiar names which are likely to cause other children to poke fun are actually

unconscious messages from the parents that the children are peculiar and deserving of ridicule.

If this is the case, then the name is probably only the first of many such messages these children get from their parents during the time their self-concepts are developing. Then it becomes a question of whether the name is the cause of the child's later psychological problems or whether the child's name is only a symptom of deeper problems within the family.

Coming back to the names **'(a) Kabaka'** (A small wild cat) and **'Goyigoyi'** (Weak), either the parents wanted to disinterest death due the fact that all the children born before were dead, or else referred to the child's character as he grew up. That is why it is always difficult to know what a name really means by just looking at it. This leads to the view that names, like other words, should not be analyzed individually, but in their contexts.

IV. 1. 3. Typology of Rundi pre-Christian Names

As different researchers mentioned in the Literature Review chapter have tried make a clear classification of Rundi names, this section also deals with the classification of the Rundi names collected through the present study as it tries to group them basing on differences and resemblances between them. In fact, the collected names can be subdivided into five main categories.

IV. 1. 3.1. Names related to Gender

Among rundi pre-Christian names, some reflect the gender of their bearers. As the collected data show, there are names peculiar to girls and others peculiar to boys. Such names may possess the suffixes **"–hungu"** and **"-kobwa"** which are

respectively male and female suffixes, or not. They include names such as **'Gahungu':** / **(a)-ka-hungu**/ (A little boy), **'Buhungu': /(u)-bu-hungu/** (Little boys), **'Ntabahungu': /nta-(a)-ba-hungu/** (No boys), **'Gakobwa': /(a)-ka-kobwa/** (A little girl), **'Ntabakobwa': / nta-(a)-ba-kobwa/** (No girls), etc. As far as my informants are concerned, they said the reason why they were given such names is related to their sex. There may be some other reasons but they still ignore them.

In names like 'Gahungu' and 'Gakobwa', the prefix **Ka-** is attached to the root –**hungu** and –**kobwa** and is, either diminutive, or sympathy marker. In the name 'Gakobwa' particularly, the voiceless **/k/** of the prefix changed into the voiced /**g**/ because of the other voiceless **/k/** of the root adjacent to it. As for the names 'Ntabahungu' and 'Ntabakobwa', the negative prefix **Nta-** is attached to the male and female gender markers respectively to make the names much more pejorative.

Other names reflecting gender do not necessarily bear those suffixes mentioned above. We can mention among others names like **'Kigeme': /(a) –ka-igeme/** (A little girl) which is the diminutive of 'Umwigeme' (a girl), **'Kamikazi': /(a)-ka-ami-kazi/** (a little queen) which is the diminutive of 'Umwamikazi' (a queen), **'Mugabo': /(u)-mu-gabo/** (a man), **'Ngabo': /(i)-n-gabo/** (people enrolled in the army), **'Ruberingabo': /ru-ber-i-n-gabo/** (good for people enrolled in the army), etc.

All these above examples also have in their morphology gender suffixes. These are –**gabo** (masculine), –**kazi** and –**geme** (feminine)**.** The latter refers to only young girls whereas the former reflects no age distinction.

However, there are names with no gender markers but which are peculiar to boys or girls exclusively. We can mention names like **'Karire'**, the diminutive

form of **'icarirc'** (grasses on which cows sleep), **'Kanyange'** (a small white bird), **'Kaneza'** (joyful), **'Keza'** (beautiful), **'Munezero'** (happiness), **'Muhorakeye'** (always happy), etc. which are peculiar to girls and **'Ntwari'** (brave) peculiar to boys. The above names connote values required for boys and girls distinctively and bear cultural aspects of the Burundian society. They either reflect what is expected from a girl and a boy respectively, how the society views them distinctively, or what they really symbolize in the society. Nevertheless, the bearers of these names do not know what their respective names really mean and why they were so named. What they know is that their names have positive meanings. That is the reason why they are not even concerned about their meanings.

IV. 1. 3. 2. Obliged Names

Obliged names are the ones referring to the order of the children in their birth and those of the children born after twins. Names of twins are part of this category, too. As gender morphemes attached to names predict the sex of the bearers, so do most ordinal morphemes in relation to the birth order of the bearer. Those names are **'Nyandwi'**: **/nya-ndwi/** (the seventh child), **'Minani': /mi-nani/** (the eighth child), **'Nyabenda': /nya-ba-enda/** (the ninth child) and **'Bucumi'**: **/bu-cumi/** (the tenth child). The suffixes **–ndwi** (seven), **-nani** (eight), **-enda** (nine) and **–cumi** (ten) are order markers.

Nevertheless, the order morpheme is not always apparent in the name. This is the case for names like **'Kabura': /ka-bur-a/** (the sixth child) derived from the rundi verb 'Kubura' (to warn). Thus, the name **'Kabura'** literally meaning **'who warns'** depicts no idea concerning birth order. Likewise **'Misago'** (the eleventh child) does not indicate any order aspect in its morphology. Instead, the name

embeds the idea of 'Urusago' (a small ghetto) which has nothing to do with birth order.

In addition to names referring to birth order, let us mention names for twins and children born after them which are also among obliged names. The first born twin is called **'Bukuru': /bu-kuru/** (the major) and the second born **'Butoyi': /bu-toyi/** (the minor). The suffixes **–kuru** and **–toyi** are opposite in their meaning and bear the idea of order to some extent.

As for names like **'Ciza': /ki-iza/** (The first born after twins), **'Nkurikiye': /n-kur-ik-ir-ye/** (the second born after twins), **'Congera': /ki-onger-a/** (The third born after twins), etc., they have no order morphemes in their morphological structure, though they follow a fixed order.

IV. 1. 3. 3. Names Related to the Neighbourhood

These are names that describe the relationship between the family and the surrounding environment. Such names express how Burundians feel sad when they do not live on good terms within their families or with their neighbours. The name **'Ntahimpera'** for instance, portrays the sorrow that the parents felt when they gave birth in the midst of their enemies. The bearer of the name said he was born in an environment where parents did not live on good terms with their neighbours and they were afraid that the latter could kill the baby anytime.

The name 'Ntahimpera' can be fragmented as follows: / **nta-ho-i-n-ha-ir-a/.** **Nta** is a negative prefix; **ho,** is a nominal pronoun showing place; **i,** is a subject pronoun standing for "Imana" (God); **n,** is the nominal pronoun standing for the first personal pronoun "I"; **ha,** is the root (verb); **ir,** is an infix and **a,** is a suffix. This name portrays the environment in which the child was born. Such a

name means that, though God gives the parents a child, there is no favourable environment to bring him up.

Trying to analyze the constituent parts above, we realize the ellipsis morphological process. That is, the vowel **o** of **ho** deletes because it is followed by the subject pronoun **i** which is a vowel too. On the contrary, the vowel **a** of **ha** blends together with the vowel **i** of the infix **–ir-** to become **e**. There is vowel change wherein **a + i = e**.

Likewise, the name **'Ntahomvukiye'** (literally translated 'I'm born nowhere') indicates how bad parents feel when they know that the child is born in an environment of hatred. As my informant said, the parents wanted to express their inner feelings and, at the same time, tried to send a message towards the child so as to make him/her conscious that the environment in which he was born is not good at all. The name **'Ntahomvukiye'** can then be fragmented as **/nta-ho-n-vuk-ir-ye/** and **r + y = y.** There is the idea of place in the name 'Ntahomvukiye' expressed by the pronoun **ho**. Besides, the consonant **/r/** of the infix **–ir** is deleted.

The name **'Ninteretse'** (It's He who makes me live) is also a pertinent example under this category. As the name bearer put it, he was so named because only God could make him survive in the midst of enemies. In other words, even though the neighbours or family members did not want the child to grow up or live, God was able to protect him. The hostile environment in which the child was born developed the feeling in the parents, as well as in the child, that if it is not God who protects the child, people will kill the child without delay.

The name **'Mbonabuca'** (I see the morning come) also embeds the idea of bad relations in the neighbourhood. As pointed out by the informant, the

environment in which he was born was not favourable. The name entails that, though the neighbourhood is hostile, it doesn't prevent the morning from coming or the sun from rising. In other words, days follow one another and the child continues to live despite the despair of the parents.

In both examples 'Ntahimpera' and 'Ntahomvukiye', the negative prefix **nta-** followed by the nominal pronoun standing for place '**ho**' comes to stress the idea of a bad environment in the neighbourhood. The meaning encoded in those names brings out the idea that the child is as if he was born in a desert given that the surrounding environment is hostile. Indeed, they express the hopelessness of the parents as far as the survival of the child is concerned.

It is obvious, through different names related to the neighbourhood, that Burundians in particular and human beings in general are deeply touched by the bad situations they go through more than the good ones. Otherwise, the names above should have included the ones expressing the good things or good relationships, or assistance parents got from the neighbours during the pregnancy or after birth, no matter how few or little they may be.

IV. 1. 3. 4. Names related to death

Parents are often afraid that death can take their children. To combat such an unfortunate situation, the parents give the child a weird name. They believe that if the name is unattractive, death will not like to take the child and this will make the child stay. Therefore, names related to death are names chosen in order not to attract death's attention on their children.

Under this category, we can mention minimizing names aiming at misleading death. Thus, names like **'Gahungu'** / **(a)-ka-hungu**/ (a little boy), **'Gakobwa'** / **(a)-ka-kobwa**/ (a little girl), **'kigeme'** / **(a)-ka-igeme/ (a** little girl**),** etc. fall

under this category. In such names, the prefix **ka-** is diminutive and expresses smallness. This may mislead death (according to pre-Christian Burundians) and make it dislike the child because the latter may not be a consistent meal for death.

Besides, we have repulsive names like the name **'(i) Soni'** (Shame) which is used to disgust death since the latter wouldn't like to take shame. This is due to the Burundian belief that even death doesn't like ugly things. It is the same for the name **'Birihanyuma'** (It is worse). The bearer of such a name got it from his grandparents. This name means that the parents compare two or more bad situations and find that the recent one is the worse. This case should then not interest death. Likewise, the name **'Kagayo'** (underestimation) is used so as to discourage death. The names **'Goyigoyi'** (weak) and **'Ngoyagoye'** (I'm weak) are also repulsive names chosen so as to mislead death. In fact, Burundians of the pre-Christian period had conceptions that, as human beings always want good things, so does death. This makes them believe that a weak being wouldn't interest death and the names above are chosen to this end. It is worth mentioning that the name 'Ngoyagoye' is a family name.

Names of animals are also pertinent examples under this category. They include names like **'Bigoro', 'Bihayi' and 'Bibara'** (which are normally names for cows), **'Kabaka'** (a small wild cat), **'Kanyana'** (a little cow). All these names aim at making the child disgust death by telling it that the child is not a human being that would interest it, but an animal.

Names of things used to refer to persons also fall under the category of names aiming at misleading death. This is the case for the names **'Gihugu'** (Country)'and **'kagoma'** (a small drum). Such names aim at misleading death

that the child is not a human being but a thing. In such a case, the child is given little value as a simple thing and death may not see any interest in him.

All the above examples come to substantiate Zuure's (1932) view that death is extremely jealous. This gives an insight into how Burundians view death. Indeed Burundians believe that death, like human beings, has likes and dislikes; the reason why such names are chosen so as to minimize or give little value to the child, and finally discourage death, though the bearers of the above names ignore the fact.

IV. 1. 3. 5. Descriptive names

These are names describing the physical traits of the child or birth conditions as put in the literature review. I can mention names like **'Goyigoyi'** (weak), **'Ngoyagoye'** (I'm weak) and **'Baringuvu'** (They are strong) which literally refer to the physical traits of the child being named. Such names are normally given regarding how weak or strong is the child physically. However, individuals can challenge these names as they grow up. As the bearer of the name asserts, he was given the name 'Goyigoyi' because he was so little and unhealthy at birth. But as he grew up, he became strong and tall at the same time. This makes the name unsuitable for him.

Besides, the name **'Mvuyekure'** (I'm from far) is descriptive as it portrays how painful or long has been the act of giving birth. According to my informant, his birth was so painful. Thus, the name portrays how the mother suffered while giving birth and how the child risked death at birth.

The names **'Kaneza'** (joy), **'Muhorakeye'** (always gay) and **'Kanyamuneza'** (happiness) express how smiling the bearers of such names were. They were

chosen taking into account the facial expression or the mood of the child. As for the name **'Keza'** (beautiful), it refers to the physical beauty of the child. It is worth reminding here that all these names above are peculiar to girls. Such names may also lose their meaning if the children born beautiful become ugly or if their smiling faces change as they grow up.

Some descriptive names are metaphorical. That is the case for the name **'Kanyange'** /ka-(i)-nyange/ which means 'beautiful like a white bird called "inyange" in Kirundi). In fact, the prefix **ka-** is attached to the root **inyange** (a white bird) to make a comparison. Such a name describes the beauty of the person being named. In the same way, the name **'Kamikazi'** /ka-(u)-(mu)-ami-kazi/ is metaphorical and compares the child to a queen. Given that the king chose his wife among the most beautiful ladies of the country, the name 'umwamikazi' (queen) is still a beauty expression. The name 'Kamikazi', then, means 'beautiful like a queen'.

Indeed, the name **'Kanyana' / (a)-ka-nyana/** (a small cow) was given to the child because she had beautiful eyes. This name is metaphorical and is culture specific. In fact, the cow has an unprecedented value in the Burundian culture thanks to its multiple social functions. As said earlier, when parents name their child, they try to express their wish or describe the traits of the child. In Burundian culture, it is common to hear people say 'Urya muntu afise amaso nk'ay'inyana' or 'Urya muntu asa n'inyana' which can be translated respectively as 'That person has eyes like those of a small cow' or 'That person resembles a small cow' to mean that the person has good eyes or is beautiful. This entails that '**inyana**' (a small cow) can symbolize beauty since even good eyes are one of the marks of beauty, as conceived in the Burundian society. It is much more expressive as it combines physical beauty and social values at the same time.

Taking into account all the categories of the Rundi pre-Christian names mentioned in the present work, we realize that some names cross boundaries to belong to more than one category. This is due to the fact that names may have different connotations in the socio-cultural context. For instance, a name may literally describe the physical traits of the child and at the same time express how Burundians fear death if it tries to describe the child negatively so as to disgust death. In same light of idea, a name may be descriptive and superstitious at the same time, given that parents may describe the beauty of the child, express their wish or perform speech acts towards him/her through the name. A name can also be descriptive and embed the socio-cultural belief, to name but a few.

IV. 2. Findings

The subject under study tackled different aspects of the Rundi pre-Christian names. After analyzing collected data from different perspectives, I found that Rundi pre-Christian names are multidimensional and multifunctional. They are full of images not easily understandable by uninformed readers. The metaphor is but one figure of speech frequent in the names having been analyzed.

Through the study, I realized that Burundians of the pre-modern period expressed their inner feelings through the names of their children. Names were, therefore, one of the means of expressing themselves about different states of affairs, among which their neighbourhood, their conditions and their beliefs.

Looked at from a morphological standpoint, the Rundi indigenous names were structured by combination of different significant parts. The prefixes **ka-** and **nta-** are frequently found in the Rundi pre-Christian names having been analyzed, especially those related to the neighbourhood and those designed to

discourage death. Indeed, different morphological processes like affixation, deletion, vowel change, consonant change, were noticed.

The socio-cultural analysis of the Rundi pre-Christian names revealed that the latter are very significant. Most of them are culture specific and reflect the Burundian beliefs to some extent. Besides, the results of the study proved that a name may affect its bearer either positively or negatively and then contribute to the self-building or self-destroying in that the child may believe the message encoded through the name and take it as true.

The indigenous names also comprise names describing different character traits like physical strength, mood, smallness or tallness, beauty, etc. Besides, indigenous names depict the social relationships in the neighborhood, especially the bad ones like jealousy and hatred.

Like Christian names, some indigenous ones are gender specific. Thus, if a boy is given a name peculiar to girls he may be laughed at and ridiculed and vice-versa. This is due to the fact that in any society, girls and boys are considered different and then people give or expect from them different attributes. And that was expressed through their respective names.

It is worth mentioning that a single name may play different roles, either cognitively or socially. Moreover, a name can be, at the same time, descriptive, allusive or simply express the desire or expectations of the parents or the society towards the name's bearer. In all cases, parents are influenced by different factors, either internal or external.

Although some names may seem odd and/or harsh to hear, parents always have a good intention towards their children while giving them names. Anyway, this

doesn't prevent the bearer of the name from undergoing its consequences, either positive or negative. In addition, though name givers may have good intentions, many people ignore the real meaning of their names. This is because parents do not tell their children the origin of their names and why they chose them. In other cases, parents give names just because they sound good without knowing or trying to know their real meanings.

Through my research, I realized that a few people bear their fathers' names. This implies that, though the idea of family and genealogy was stressed in the pre-Christian Rundi names, it was not common, except for kings' and princes' families.

Furthermore, Burundians of the pre-modern period were superstitious about various things among which a name was but one. From their belief, a name could help the child grow if it doesn't interest death or anticipate the child's death if it is interesting enough to death. This makes parents feel frightened about giving the child a name which is among the so-called good ones; which is expressed by the Kirundi term '**Gucira ikuzo**'. That is reason why, sometimes, parents choose strange and unpleasant names to disinterest death.

In a nutshell, the meaning of pre-Christian names can be well understood when studied from different angles. In fact, a name can have different meanings and connotations in accordance with which angle it is studied from. What is important then is to determine the meaning of the name by a combination of the different factors embedded in it so as not to be mistaken about its right meaning. Indeed, indigenous names were closely related to culture and society in that the ways they were given and the messages encoded in them could be better understood taking into account their cultural and social contexts.

Trying to compare the indigenous and modern names, I realize that parents today focus more on how the name sounds than on its content. Modern names are taken for granted and the cultural values reflected in the indigenous ones are melting away in the same way as a good number of traditional values are dying away in the modern society.

CHAPTER V: GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

V.1. General Conclusion

Since the earliest of times and across many cultures, names have been thought of as tools for growth and as media for personal evolution. Of course, our names' primary purpose is for identification, but the ancients had a clear understanding that a person's name effects more than his or her identity. They knew that each person's name carries with it an energetic frequency that can have a multi-faceted impact on the name-bearer's life, personality, and success. Thus, it is of crucial importance to give your baby a balanced name. In so doing, you are setting in motion a pattern of constructive qualities of intelligence that will be the foundation of your child's personality, thinking patterns, and nature.

Therefore, rather than asking, "What does my name mean?" people would focus on "What is my name's impact?". This is because if one just takes the quick meaning provided by the name, it would be more superficial than the deep psychological impact of a name. Indeed, the names we bear affect us to some extent. As earlier said, the act of uttering a sentence is part of performing the action expressed through that sentence. In the same light, giving a name to a newborn is performing some actions over his/her life. A balanced baby name will create intelligent mental qualities such as being expressive, happy, generous, outgoing, giving, responsible, reliable, stable, intellectual, and peaceful - to name but a few. This entails that names with negative connotations will affect their bearers negatively whereas those with positive connotations will do so positively.

The results of my research reveal that names were and are still pregnant with messages. Name givers often seek to impact the named person, as well as the person to whom the wishes expressed through the name are directed. The names

can be chosen in relation to different factors such as the physical appearance of the person to be named, the events prevailing at the time of birth, and the name givers' expectations towards the named one. Children can also bear their fathers' names, especially in high class families.

Besides their function of identifying one person from another, names are part of the culture itself as earlier mentioned. That is the reason why the way they are given and the importance attached to them differ from one culture to another.

Nevertheless, even though parents often send messages towards their children through names, a few tell them the real meaning of their names and why they are so named. This the reason why most of the youth still ignore the meaning encoded through their names.

It is worth mentioning that, even though nowadays' names seem to be fantasist, there are some messages expressed through them- like in the pre-Christian names. Names are powerful social tools to build or destroy mentalities and even the society itself.

V.2. Recommendations

My recommendations are addressed to both parents as name givers and to individuals as name bearers. As far as parents are concerned, they should be objective in the naming process. While choosing names for their children, parents should take into account the idea of keeping and fixing the history of individuals, families and societies. Indeed, parents should think twice so as to choose balanced names for their children. Besides, parents should not look down on the cultural aspect of names because the latter are powerful tools to promote

social values and good customs of the society and can, therefore, constitute a vehicle for culture transmission from generation to generation.

Furthermore, name givers should not take names for granted. Names are culture specific and people should make good use of them so as to promote the good values of the society. They should give their children names that incite them to love and mutual understanding rather than to hatred and divisions.

Last but not least, parents should tell their children about their names, the message encoded in them and why such names were chosen among so many others. This may help the children to come up with the real meanings of their names and make them like a name which seemed strange and pejorative before.

As for name bearers, they should not be victims of their names' bad or good connotations. On the contrary, they should do well, in the first case to challenge their names, and in the second case, to deserve the good quality expressed through the name.

Anyway, I cannot claim to have tackled all the aspects of the Rundi pre-Christian names. The latter being multifaceted and thus likely to be studied from different perspectives, the subject under study is too broad for the present study to be exhaustive. Further research is recommended to bring out other aspects of the Rundi pre-Christian names not dealt with in the present work and that previous researches related to the topic did not tackle.

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APPENDIX

The Questionnaire

A) Questions to parents as name givers

i) Chers parents, pouvez-vous me dire ce qui vous aide à choisir les noms de vos enfants?

- Dear parents, can you tell me what helps you in choosing names for your children?

ii) Est-ce que vos enfants portent le nom de leur père?

- Do your children bear their father's name?

iii) Pensez-vous que les noms de vos enfants ont un impact sur eux-mêmes ou sur leur entourage ?

- Do you think your children's names have a social impact on them or their neighbourhood?

iv) Parmi les raisons suivantes, quelles sont celles qui vous ont poussés à choisir les noms de vos enfants ?

- Among the following reasons, on the basis of which ones have you chosen the names of your children?

a) L'aspect physique de l'enfant

- The physical aspect of the child

a) Relations avec les voisins

- Relationships with neighbours

b) Les circonstances dans lesquelles l'enfant est né

- The circumstances in which the child was born

c) D'autres raisons. Précisez-les

- Other reasons. Precise them

v) Si vous comparez le passé au présent, remarquez-vous des changements quant au choix des noms dans la société Burundaise ?

- If you compare the past to the present, do you realize any change in the Burundian naming process?

vi) S'il y a eu changement, quelles en sont les causes?

- If there is some change, what are the causes?

B) Questions to the named ones

1) Portez-vous le nom de votre père ?
- Do you bear your father's name?
2) Est-ce que vos parents vous ont dit pourquoi ils vous ont donné un tel nom et sa signification?
- Did your parents tell you the meaning of your name and why they named you so?
3) Est-ce que votre nom a un impact sur votre vie ?
- Does your name have an impact on you?
4) Si on abandonne la façon traditionnelle de choisir les noms, pensez-vous qu'il y aura des conséquences sur la culture burundaise ?

Do you think there will be an impact on the Burundian culture if we abandon our traditional way of providing names?