

Divinity and Destiny in the Religion of Ruanda-Urundi

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Ruanda and Urundi belong to the Ruanda cluster of the interlactustrine Bantu in the regions surrounded by a great ring of lakes—Tanganyika, Kivu, Edward Albert, Kioga and Victoria. Pygmoid hunters and gatherers still survive among some tribes of the Ruanda cluster, and in both Ruanda and Urundi, people of “Hamitic” (Nilotic) origin live side by side with the original tribes. Most of the societies today reveal a sharp stratification into endogamous castes with a ruling aristocracy of herders called Tutsi, a subject agricultural peasantry called Hutu, and often also a depressed caste of Pygmy hunters, called Twa.¹

Animal husbandry approaches agriculture in economic importance, except Tutsi and Hima who subsist almost exclusively on the products of their herds. Descent, inheritance, and succession conform to the patrilineal mode. Exogamy applies to all members of one’s own patrisib. Marriage is not allowed within the clan, and intermarriage between certain clans is also tabu. In Runda the local community tends to assume the form of a patriclan but other tribes seem to lack clan division. There are no compact villages. The family is the unit of the community. “In fact there is no word for village or town in either language, the nearest equivalent being a word meaning a collection of *rugos*. The *rugo* is the fence surrounding the homestead ... Only members of the same family live in the *rugo*, with their servants.”²

¹ C. P. Murdock, *Africa. Its Peoples and Their Culture History*, New York 1959, pp. 347 ff.

² R. Guillebaud, “The Doctrine of God in Ruanda-Urundi” (In: *African Ideas of God*, ed. E. W. Smith, London 1950) p. 180. Regarding the religious conditions among the tribes, see further A. Arnoux, “Le Culte de la Société Secrète des Imandwa au Ruanda” *Anthropos* VII, 1912, pp. 273 ff., 529 ff., 840 ff., and *Anthropos* VIII, 1913, pp. 110 ff., 754 ff.; P. Schumacher, “Die Ehe in Ruanda”, *Anthropos* V, 1910, pp. 870 ff., *Anthropos* VII, 1912, pp. 5 ff.

Even if the beliefs in Ruanda and in Urundi differ in detail, the general religious system is the same among the both peoples. The influences—good or evil—on the life of mankind, on the social orders etc. come from what I should like to determine as the ultrahuman or superhuman¹ part of the world. This ultrahuman part of the world may be divided in the following way:²

1. Certain more or less material powers are believed to be inherent in some special objects. Many things, species of plants, animals, etc. have in them certain powers.³ These powers are transmitted and used for practical purposes by the magicians, doctors, diviners (*bafumu*), and rain-doctors (*bavurati*.)

2. The *bihume*, half material, half spiritual beings who can be seen under special circumstances. They are as a rule evil beings who are thought to live in haunted places and the only way of escaping the *bihume* is to avoid such places.

3. The *mizimu*, the spirits of the dead. The *mizimu* are divided into two classes, the *mizimu*, the spirits of common people, the *muzimu*, the spirits of important chiefs.

4. The national spirit *Ryangombe*, a personal spirit or national ancestor or hero, to whom a real cult consisting in offerings and prayers is directed.

5. The creator-god *Immāna*.⁴

¹ Cf. G. Lienhardt, *Divinity and Experience*, Oxford 1961, p. 28, where the terms "human" and "ultrahuman" are found. I wish to avoid the term "supernatural world" because the African peoples and—as I believe—also other primitive peoples do not reckon with what we call natural and supernatural. The relation between man and the gods or spirits has nothing "supernatural", in the western sense of the word, for the primitive man. The gods and the spirits are parts of the world in which man lives. The gods and the spirits have human qualities but in a higher potens than man has. The 'powers', spirits and gods are "regarded as higher in the scale of being than men and operate beyond the categories of space and time which limit human actions. They emerge in the interpretation of events: those which are of men and those which are of powers (spirits, gods)". (Lienhardt). In many Bantu languages there are no terms for what we call "natural", "supernatural", "empirical" and "transcendental". See J. D. Krige, "An Address Inaugurating the chair of Social Anthropology, delivered in Durban on the sixteenth of August 1947", *Theoria, A Journal of Studies*, Pietermaritzburg 1948, p. 108, where the author with regard to the Lovedu magical practices states that no dividing line exists between what we call natural and supernatural.

² B. Zuure, "Immāna, le Dieu des Barundi", *Anthropos* XXI, 1926, p. 735.

³ Cf. O. Pettersson, "Magic and Medicine in South African Bantu Psychiatry", *Centaurus* 9, 1963, København 1964, p. 298.

⁴ I cannot decide whether or not the original name of the creator might have been Nya-Murunga, 'creator', as Alexis Kagame has tried to demonstrate in *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être*, Bruxelles 1956.

The above-mentioned five 'elements' of the religion are of course, not distinguished. They form rather an entirety and the people do not in their *normal* daily life decide if an event comes from the *mizimu*, *muzimu*, from *Ryangombe* or *Immāna* or from the magicians. The different events which take place in the life of man or in the life of the tribe they ascribe as a rule to the ultrahuman world as an entirety, even if they sometimes attribute events to the ancestors, to *Ryangombe* or to another spiritual being. In their worship people may approach a special god with special requests even if there is no clear dividing-line between the deities. In one situation man may address *Ryangombe*, in another the *muzimu* or *mizimu*, in a third situation they may turn to the *bafumu* or *bavurati* in order to get help and assistance or in order to divert illness or other misfortunes. Then they say that 'god', *without specification*, has given his help or has refused to help: "He has saved you from destruction", "He has saved you at last", "He still causes you to stand up", "They have seen you", "I am alive because of him", "I depend on him", "He has taken his hands off him".¹

In the present survey of the god *Immāna* and his relation to the destiny of man, we may first try to get a picture of the god as the people see him. In describing *Immāna* it is necessary to distinguish between the following:

1. *Immāna* in the myths.
2. *Immāna* in the proverbs, sayings and songs.
3. *Immāna* in the worship.
4. *Immāna*'s rôle in the daily life of man.

In the myths *Immāna* is described as creator. He takes the rôle of the creator of the first man and the first woman: "*Immāna* créa un jeune homme et une femme. Ils construisirent une petite hutte dans la brousse. Ils eurent deux enfants. Ceux-ci étaient mauvais. Les premiers étaient des Batutsi, les seconds des Bahutu. Ensuite *Immāna* créa la vache, la chèvre, le mouton. Les Bahutu viennent, ils voient la vache. Ils ont peur. Ils s'enfuient. Les Batutsi viennent, se signent de craie blanche, conduisent la vache. Les Bahutu prennent la chèvre et le mouton."2 From the lines quoted it appears that *Immāna* is not only the creator but also the organizer of the social order in the tribe. He sanctioned during the mythic period the social order that

¹ In some of the sentences quoted "he" may be identical with *Immāna*.

² *Zuure, op. cit.*, p. 753.

still prevails in tribal life. The mythic period thus determines the future.¹ It is worth noticing that the myth does not deal with Immāna as the creator of the world. The quoted myth deals only with the creation of man as do all African creation myths.² From a general point of view the Africans have very little interest in the origin of the world. The earth existed when the creation took place, and the Africans see to be satisfied with this. Further information is offered by Baumann who has given a clear exposition of the creation ideas in African religions.³ He has analysed some 2500 myths and legends and based upon them a study of African cosmology. He has proved beyond dispute that there are no *original* African myths dealing with the *creation of the world*. Ideas insisting on a world creation are of non-African origin. When the creator appears in the history of creation, earth and heaven already existed.⁴

Another myth tells how Death came to mankind. At one time Death did not live amongst people, and whenever he appeared Immāna gave chase to him. On one occasion he was being hunted down, and ran into a narrow place where he collided with a woman coming in the opposite direction. He immediately besought her to hide him saying, "Hide me, and I will hide you and yours". The woman opened her mouth, and Death jumped inside and she swallowed him. Immāna came up and said: "What has happened to Death? Did you see which way he took?" The woman denied having seen Death. Then Immāna who knew supernaturally what had happened, said: "Seeing you have hidden Death, Death will destroy both you and yours." From that moment Death spread in the land.⁵ This myth refers to Urundi. The Ruanda have the same myth in another version, according to which it is a king—not Immāna himself—who was hunting Death.⁶ Immāna did not create Death. Death existed in the mythic period, but he had no power to injure man until the woman took him under her protection.

¹ Cf. M. Eliade, *Die Religionen und das Heilige*, Salzburg 1954, p. 446, P. Schebesta, *Ursprung der Religion*, Berlin 1960, pp. 43 ff.

² Cf. O. Pettersson, *Chiefs and Gods*, Lund 1953, pp. 172 ff.

³ H. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythos der afrikanischen Völker*, Berlin 1936, pp. 185 ff.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 163: "Die Erde ist meist schon vorhanden, wenn die Schöpfung einsetzt und der Eingeborene begnügt sich mit dieser Tatsache."

⁵ The myth is quoted after Guillebaud, *op. cit.* pp. 193 ff.

⁶ See Zuure, *Op. cit.*, pp. 754 f.

Immāna's words to the woman—that man would die—applied for all time to men's fate.

There are myths which will show how Immāna in the mythic period intervened in human affairs and punished men who did not follow his divine order. One myth runs as follows: A beautiful girl wished to marry nobody but a prince. Her mother forbade her to work on the fields so that she would not spoil her hands. Immāna revealed himself to the girl and ordered her to work on the fields together with her mother. The mother, however, said to the girl that she should not obey the god but go home and do nothing that could spoil her beauty. The god punished the girl and her mother in the following way. He made the girl meet a poor man belonging to the *mutwa* people whom the Rundi regarded as pariahs. The girl and her mother, however, believed that the poor *mutwa*-man was a prince and the girl married him.¹

In other myths, the events of which take place during the mythic times, men are informed about Immāna's demands on men concerning their ethical behaviour.² A myth dealing with the problem of why Immāna no longer lives among men expresses the idea of Immāna's sovereignty. Briefly, the myth runs as follows. At first Immāna lived among men, and he went about among them and talked with them, creating children, until one day he created a crippled child. The parents were very angry and one of them took a knife and began to watch for an opportunity of killing Immāna. The god knew all about it, and said, "If they are going to behave like that I will depart to my own place, and not show myself any more. Then I can create as I please, and if they are not satisfied, they can just grumble!"

Thus, the myths give the god the following characteristics. In the mythic period Immāna organized the world: he created man and animals etc., he gave death free scope and punished transgressions of the divine will. It seems to be clear that the myths dealing with Immāna and the rôle played by him in the mythic period have the character of being a philosophical-rational explanation of the world, of human conditions and ethics. This theoretical

¹ *Ib.*, p. 757.

² For examples see E. Johanssen, "The Idea of God in the Myths and Proverbs of Some East African Bantu Tribes", *International Review of Mission* XX, 1931, pp. 541 ff.

philosophy also performs, however, a practical purpose, viz. to strengthen tribal beliefs and ethics.¹

In the proverbs Immāna is often mentioned in words that may allude to the idea that the god is believed to be behind the destiny of men and the order of the world. When a person has escaped a great danger or has been saved from a sure death, they say, "*Wagize Immāna*" (You have Immāna), "you have seen Immāna" or "Immāna saved you". On recovery from a serious illness they say, "He (Immāna) still causes you to stand up". When a person dies, Immāna is said to let go of him, "Immāna has let him go" or "Immāna has taken his hand off him". Among the other proverbs and sayings the following examples may be mentioned. To a person who is in distress they can say, "The enemy prepares you a grave, but Immāna prepares you a way of escape". A proverb running as follows may show the idea that Immāna is the sustainer of the order of the world: "The tree set up by Immāna cannot be blown down by the wind."²

Immāna is supreme: he gives and takes, unfettered by the wishes and desires of men. This thought is expressed in the following way: "What Immāna has let go of no one can bring back", "Immāna gives to you; you cannot trade with him: if you do, he will drive a hard bargain. No one can take from him to whom Immāna has given," "Immāna knows about the things of tomorrow".³ The quotations have a fatalistic character: luck and misfortune alternate, and man has only to accommodate himself to the course of events.

The ethical rules and man's behavior are reflected in the proverbs as well as in the myths. Immāna wishes man to work and do his duties in the world; the god does not like complacency and he punishes envy etc. "You pray for blessing to Immāna when sitting by the hearth, and he anoints you with ashes", i.e. 'do not expect him to help you if you do not do any work', "Rather than praise yourself you should be praised by Immāna". "You cry for the luck of another, and Immāna sends you scabies" (i.e. envy makes a person more and more miserable).

¹ Cf. B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays*, New York 1954, p. 101: "It (the myth) expresses, enhances and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality ..."

² Guillebaud, "The Doctrine of God", pp. 189 ff. 195.

³ *Ib.*, pp. 196 f.

In song there is very little about Immāna. Rosemary Guillebaud has recorded a Rundi lullaby:¹

Hush, child of my mother
 Hush, hush, O my mother!
 Immāna who gave you to me,
 If only I could meet him
 I would fall on my knees and pray to him,
 I would pray for little babies,
 For little babies on my back.
 You came when the moon was shining
 Yoy came when another was rising.
 Hush, field that we share,
 That we share with Immāna!
 Immāna who gave you to me
 May he also bring you up for me ...

When a person is extremely sad, especially after bereavement, or when a woman has been driven away by her husband, they may express their laments in the following words:

As for me, Immāna has eaten me
 As for me, he has not dealt with me as with others ...
 Sorrow is not to hang the head mourning,
 Sorrow is not to go weeping ...

A person in Ruanda may bewail his lot in such words as these:

I do not know what Immāna is punishing me for: if I could meet with him I would kill him. Immāna, why are you punishing me? Why have you not made me like other people? ...²

To sum up we can state that the name Immāna is often mentioned in proverbs and sayings and sometimes in songs. Here he seems to take the rôle of determiner of man's destiny; in the sayings, the exceptional occurrences in life are attributed to Immāna. A knowledge of the natural, ordinary course of events, learned by experience, if not conscious then unconscious, and self-evident, is essential to the life of every man. Without such knowledge his existence would be simply impossible. The Africans know that summer

¹ *Ib.*, p. 197.

² *Ib.*, pp. 198 f. Cf. Schumacher, *op. cit.* p. 899 with an extract from a marriage song where Immāna is mentioned.

follows upon winter, that the sun rises and sets on regular times. The different phases of the moon are well known and used as time-measurer, etc. They know that, what they sow or plant will wax and bear fruit, that it will rain sometimes, in certain countries at certain seasons, that some season is the rutting time of the animals and that they will bear their young at a certain season. They know that when they hit an animal with an arrow it will be killed or at least wounded. Nothing will—according to their interpretation of the world—happen by chance. There is always a cause behind the events, and they are not satisfied with a “natural cause”. They see an arrow kill a man, and they know that the arrow caused his death, but they ask further: ‘Which person, spirit, god, magician caused the arrow to hit the person who was killed by it?’¹ The unchangeability of the laws of nature is quite as self-evident to Africans as to westerners, even if the primitives do not explicitly give expression to it. However, they arrange their lives according to the regularity of the order of things.

Divergences, however, take place in the normal world-order, in nature as well as in man’s life. The natural sequence of events can be broken. An expected event may not occur and an unexpected one may happen. If rain does not fall at the regular times, famine will occur and men and animals will die, and if a woman gives birth to her child prematurely, the child will die, etc. When the Africans wish to explain a remarkable, exceptional event—a sudden death, an unforeseen illness, a miscarriage, etc.—they attribute the events to *the ultrahuman world*, i.e. to sorcery, to malicious spirits, to ancestors or to gods. It seems as if the ancestors, Ryangombe, and other superhuman beings and ‘forces’ flow together in Immāna. The myths also contain some expressions indicating vague ideas of special evil beings that have no relation to the ancestral spirits. They are said to await a chance to do harm and their only aim is to spoil what Immāna has done. In Urundi this spirit is called *Rwuba* and he is characterized as the adversary of Immāna. In Ruanda they do not speak of *Rwuba* but of *Immana Ruremankwachi* and *Immana Ruremba*. The mentioned beings have no known form, and they are not worshipped. They seem to be wholly theoretical abstractions used in the aetiological myths to elucidate the problem of theodicy. These beings

¹ Cf. E. Ehnmark, *Anthropomorphism and Miracle*, Uppsala 1939, p. 199. Cf. also L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, Paris 1910, pp. 75 f.

hold their position in the myths as causers of evil, dangerous and ugly things that happen in the world and disturb the world-order. They have disrupted—and still disrupt—Immāna's creation, but do not have any practical religious function.¹ In order to see if our hypothesis that Immāna stands for the ultrahuman world is plausible, we must analyse Immāna's rôle in every-day religious worship. We must know whether there is any conformity between the rôle ascribed to Immāna in the every day sayings and the rôle played by him in practical worship. Immāna does not intervene in human life as a punisher of crimes against the tribal order. Those who guard the social and ethical laws of the tribe are the national or private ancestors—not the supreme being.

There is no worship directed to Immāna, even if they say that they offer their cult to the 'god'. The 'god' is, however, not identical with Immāna. The 'god' is Ryangombe or another ancestral deity. In their worship there are no clear dividing-lines between the different deities,² even if the worshippers say that they turn to a special deity.

When the people are in real trouble, when the world-order is disturbed, they can pray to Immāna. The following prayer may illustrate this:

O Immāna of Urundi (Ruanda), if only you would help me! O Immana of piety, Immāna of my father's home ... if only you would help me! O Immāna of the country of the Hutu and the Tutwi, if only you would give help to me just this once! O Immāna, if only you would give me a rugo and children! I prostrate myself before you, Immāna of Urundi (Ruanda), I cry to you: give me offspring, give me as you give to others. Immāna, what shall I do, where shall I go? I am in distress, where is there room for me? ...

The quoted form of prayer, said by a barren woman to Immāna in order to get a child, is the only form of direct prayer that has been recorded as far as I know. Sayings in the form of a wish are, however, not uncommon, "Oh, that Immāna would spare my children to me"³ etc. No offerings are

¹ Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 183 f.

² Zuure, *op. cit.*, p. 738: "La confusion est grande. Très souvent ils se trompent d'adresse. Ils disent Immāna, mais ils pensent à Kiranga (=Ryangombe) ou à une autre chose." See further Arnoux, "Le culte", *Anthropos* VII p. 275 note 1: "Le culte envers le créateur Immāna n'existe pas au Ruanda, ou du moins, n'y est pas organisé."

³ Johanssen, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

made to him, but only to the national or private ancestral spirits. The prayer may promise offerings to Immāna if he helps, but no offerings are made.¹

There is a very interesting custom, called *Amazi y'Immana*: A little water is kept in the house all night. No married woman who has expectations of childbearing would ever go to bed without seeing that there was water in the house. Immāna is thought to create during the night. His creation does not take place at the moment of conception only; it continues night after night. If the god found no water he would mis-create. What is the water for? According to some explanations, Immāna wants to drink when he comes in the night. Others say that he wants to wash after he has created.² The most credible explanation, however, seems to be that the idea behind this custom has its parallel in the custom of the potters. Just as the potter uses water when he forms the clay for pots and jars, Immāna has to use water when he forms (creates) a child.

Man's future life—his destiny—is connected with the act of creation. The god would mis-create, if he did not find any water. In the light of this belief the words quoted above,³ "Why have you not made me like other people?" have a meaning. Man protests against his destiny, but "the tree set up by Immāna cannot be blown down by the wind." The thought that man's future is connected with his creation does not, however, end in fatalism. A proverb runs, "Immāna has a starting-point for everything he does", i.e. he helps those who help themselves, or "You pray to Immāna for blessing when sitting by the hearth, and he anoints you with ashes".⁴

From the survey given above we may conclude that, according to the myths and proverbs and in worship, Immāna seems to be the determining power over man's life. He represents the world-order, i.e. the laws that he fixed in the mythical period at the creation. Men's destinies differ without any obvious cause. This fact is attributed to Immāna, to his creation in the mythical period and to his contribution to the creation of man in recent times. "Immāna gives to you. You cannot trade with him: if you do, he will

¹ B. Zuure, "Poésies chez les Barundi", *Afrika* 5, 1932, p. 346: "Je te ferai dormir avec beaucoup de bière. Je tuerai pour toi une vache stérile. Je te sacrifierai un grand pot de bière."

² Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

³ Above, p. 6.

⁴ Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

drive a hard bargain." The problems of right and justice and the meaning of life have their origin in difficult situations. A person in great distress asks about the meaning of life and rightness and justice of the events. If people are in trouble, they ask such questions. But if all goes well, they do not think about them. It is the harsh conditions of life that present the problems dealing with the causes of events. However, it is worth noticing that not all events are attributed to Immāna. Some misfortunes may be caused by Ryangombe and the ancestral spirits. Immāna has no jurisdiction over Ryangombe or over the *mizimu* and *muzimu* or over the other spirits. Illness, childlessness—a serious misfortune in Africa—may be due to the dissatisfaction of the ancestors of the living. Such a misfortune can be diverted by ceremonies where the spirits are conciliated. If the misfortune does not disappear in spite of the fact that prescribed rites are performed, the cause is attributed to Immāna and man has nothing to do but to submit to his will—often with grumbling and complaints, expressed in sentences or—sometimes—in prayers.

From the survey it is also clear that Immāna has an abstract-theoretical aetiological character, expressed in myths and proverbs. This character may also be illustrated by other ideas among the people. In the realm of oracle and ordeal the word Immāna is used. The animal whose viscera are inspected by the diviner to pronounce judgement is called Immāna. The diviner examines the liver and addresses it in the following way: "O Immāna, be bright or dark." Even the bones of the animals used are holy and are Immāna, and the branches of the *Ficus religiosa* planted over the buried viscera of an animal which has been used for an oracle are also called Immāna. It seems evident that Immāna designates something mystic or holy.¹ Father Zuure gives an interesting example that illustrates—so it seems—that a person who performs an exceptional thing can be addressed as Immāna. Zuure's example may be quoted verbatim:

¹ Zuure, *op. cit.*, p. 736: Immāna "garde quelque chose de mysterieux, de sacré, de respectueux ..."—Cf. Arnoux, "Le culte" *Anthropos* VII, p. 284: "Immāna est fréquemment usité pour désigner des êtres autres que le Créateur: des amulettes, la taureau du troupeau etc." See also p. 284, where it is stated that Immāna is identified with different gods. When the word Immāna appears in the plural, it means 'luck'. See Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

“Qu’est ce qu’Immāna?” — “C’est toi”, me répondit un matin un vieux païen, “c’est toi Immāna. Hier soir j’ai prié keranga (= Ryangombe) de me donner du tabac. Il ne m’en a pas donné. J’ai demandé aux *mizimu* (esprits); rien. J’ai demandé à mes enfants; rien encore. Et toi ce matin, je te demande, tu me donnes: tu es Immāna. Peusses-tu rester longtemps dans ce pays.”¹

The people have very vague ideas of Immāna. When father Zuure asked the Rundi about Immāna, as a rule they answered that they did not know anything about him. “Ask the old people”, they said, “they may perhaps know something”. People use the name of the god in their sayings and proverbs but they do not know anything about him. This fact is not surprising in the light of what has been said above: Immāna has no practical function. His area is that of the theoretical—abstract—not to say theological—explanations and of exceptional events in man’s life.

As we said above, Immāna has no jurisdiction over the other superhuman beings, and therefore it may be inconsistent to name him “supreme being”. A supreme being may be a god who has a selfevident supremacy over all gods and spirits of the pantheon.² Among the Ruanda and Urundi they believe, for example, that Ryangombe can prevent Immāna from helping people.³ Ryangombe, who is malevolent in the main, can disturb the order of human life and there is a highly organized cult connected with his worship. He can, however, also sometimes be regarded as “a sort of minister of Immāna, carrying out Immāna’s commissions”.⁴

Man wishes to interpret and understand life and its events. The external events that befall man—which are adverse to the normal order of life—may be described as man’s destiny.⁵ Destiny implies always an order that is accepted as the normal one, but destiny derives its character from its fickleness.

¹ Zuure, *op. cit.*, p. 738.

² For this problem that cannot be discussed in this short paper, see R. Pettazzoni, *The All-Knowing God.*, London 1956, pp. 1 ff., 11 ff. et passim.

³ See for Ryangombe, B. Zuure, “Croyances et pratiques religieuses des Barundi”, *Bibliographie Ethnographique du Congo Belge XXII*, Bruxelles 1929.

⁴ Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁵ Cf. H. Ringgren, “Schicksal”, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 5, Tübingen 1961, sp. 1404 f: Destiny is the “allgemeine Erfahrung dass das, was den Menschen trifft, nicht von ihm, sondern von etwas ausser ihm Seiendem abhängig ist ...”

In the interpretation of destiny, theistic and fatalistic conceptions can intermingle.¹ In the religious ideas of the Bantu of Urundi and Ruanda, however, the events that have a farreaching influence on man's life, that is events that form his destiny, are thought to have their causes in the superhuman world. According to their religion it is impossible to speak of a fate, meaning an impersonal force or order that absolutely predetermines all events, or a 'fatalism', that is, the attitude of mind which accepts whatever happens as having been bound or decreed to happen.

The people of Urundi and Ruanda have a theistic—to use the word in a wide meaning—interpretation of the events. What happens to man always has its cause in the superhuman world, and Immāna may often stand for this world. Man connects his condition with the will of the superhuman beings, who have power over him. The Africans do not often concern themselves with fatalistic thoughts. It is quite natural that the living ideas of a creator who, in the mythical period, instituted the order of the world and the customs of the tribe—which are expressed by the myths—may lead to a theistic interpretation of what happens to man. Even if Immāna is a mythical aetiological god, his existence proves the belief in an order of life and nature.

Professor Widengren says of Immāna that "he is a pronounced god of destiny, at the same time good and evil and wholly capricious".² This conclusion may be correct, even if it is too general. We may compare this utterance with a remark, expressed by one of the best authorities on the religions of the Bantu in Ruanda-Urundi, Rosemary Guillebaud, who states: "Immāna comes perfectly naturally into the talk of the people, always reverently, though *without any display of fear, for Immāna is good, no one is afraid of him* (italics mine) I have never heard anyone speak of him flippantly except people who consider he has given them a raw deal—old people, for instance, whose children have all died young—or those who, worse still, have had no children."³ Professor Widengren has laid stress upon an idea—that he seems to regard as general in the religions—according to which the

¹ H. Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism*, Uppsala 1955, p. 199.

² G. Widengren, *Hochgottglaube im alten Iran*, Uppsala 1938, p. 47: "Er (Immāna) ist also ein ausgesprochener Schicksalsgott, zugleich gut und böse, und vollkommen unberechenbar."

³ Guillebaud, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

supreme being may be the primary determiner of destiny.¹ Even if he does not mention Pratt's wellknown definition of religion, this shows a striking resemblance with his characterization of the supreme beings.² From Widengren's interpretation the conclusions follows that every form of impersonal conception of destiny may be secondary. It is, however, outside the scope of this short paper to discuss the rightness of this hypothesis.

¹ Widengren, *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 70 ff. *et passim*.

² J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*, New York 1937, p. 26.