The *Akazehe* of Burundi: Polyphonic Interlocking Greetings and the Female Ceremonial

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Abstract

Akazehe is one of the names in Burundi for forms of sung greeting performed exclusively by women. Studies carried out during the colonial era (in particular Rodegem 1965, 1973) and in more recent times (Ndimurwanko 1985-6) have shown how the contents of these greetings among women are closely linked to the feminine world in which these greetings are used—in specific private and public spaces in accordance with rural tradition. Although these greetings were becoming less common at the time the research for this article was conducted, the author was able to record a number of *akazehe* after listening to examples of them in the sound archives of the Centre de civilisation burundaise.

A greeting is defined by linguists as a formalized parenthesis that defines, reiterates, and encloses the relation between two participants. The formulaic character of a greeting makes it different from ordinary speech. In the case of the *akazehe*, the greeting emphasizes gestural and sound qualities to such an extent that it creates a veritable musical texture.

This article presents transcriptions and analysis of some models of *akazehe*, focusing on one that features procedures of vocal interlocking. The two parts—*gutura* and *kwakira*—are organized according to musical rules that manifest a strong spirit of cooperation between the two women who sing the two parts in dialogue. Furthermore, well-defined rules of exchange for the two roles semantically remind us of the social equality between the two participants. The musical enrichment of the time reserved for the greeting is experienced as amusing by the performers. The greeting also represents an opportunity for artistic expression in a social reality that otherwise allows few performance spaces for women.

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Serena Facci is Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology and Popular Music Studies at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata.” She specializes in Italian music, African music, intercultural music education, and music and migration. She studied ethnomusicology at the University of Rome “La Sapienza” with Prof. Diego Carpitella, obtaining her Laurea in 1980. In the same year, she also received a Diploma in Voice at the Conservatory of Music in Frosinone. Facci’s early research focused on the musical traditions of Central and Eastern Africa and resulted in publications on the music and dance of the Banande and Bakonzo (“Dances Across the Boundary: Banande and Bakonzo in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2009), and on music in the traditional rituals of Kubandwa in Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda (“La musica nelle religioni tradizionali africane,” *Rivista internazionale di Musica Sacra*, 2000-2001). She also produced a CD for the Archives International de Musique Populaires (*Entre les lacs et la forêt. La musique des Nande*, 1991) and a documentary about the dances of Banande (*Danze Nande*, 1989) with Cecilia Pennacini. As an extension of these interests, Facci has also written about intercultural musical education in her *Capre, Flauti e Re: Musica e dialogo interculturale a scuola* (1997), and in *Chant d'Italie* (2012) which she co-authored with Gabiella Santini. In 2011, she and Paolo Soddu wrote *Il Festival di Sanremo. Parole e suoni raccontano la nazione* (The Festival of Sanremo. Words and Sounds Narrate the Nation). Since 2013 Facci has been researching the intercultural implication of migratory movements, coordinating a research group on liturgical chant and music in Christian immigrant communities in Rome, in the context of the research program of the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) and the University of Rome “Tor Vergata.” She has recently completed *Rosa di maggio. Le registrazioni di Luigi Colacicchi e Giorgio Nataletti in Ciociaria (1949-1950)* with Giuseppina Colicci (2018).

Alessandra Ciucci is Assistant Professor of Music (Ethnomusicology) at Columbia University. She has published on a number of topics focusing on music, gender and sung poetry in Morocco and on music among Moroccan migrants in Italy, in *Ethnomusicology*, *The Yearbook for Traditional Music*, *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Mondi Migranti*, *Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles*, *Ethnomusicology Forum*, *The Journal of North African Studies*, and in several encyclopedias and edited volumes. She is currently writing her first monograph tentatively titled: *Resonances of the Rural across the Mediterranean: Music, Sound and Migrant Moroccan Men in Italy*.

Manuscript Editor’s Introduction—Alessandra Ciucci:

Although this is not the first publication from Serena Facci’s rich and diverse bibliography to reach English-language readers, this new translation offers the most representative example of her early research in central and eastern Africa available in English to date. It introduces two key interests that continue to be central in her work: polyphony and the vocal repertoire of women. The article, which originally appeared within the edited collection *Polifonie: Procedimenti, tassonomie e forme: una riflessione a più voci* (1996), is also representative of an important turn in Italian ethnomusicology. Until the 1970s, Italian ethnomusicologists almost solely concentrated on researching music within their national territory. Facci’s article, therefore, should be framed in the context of what came to be known as “l’etnomusicologia italiana fuori casa” (Italian ethnomusicology away from home), an expression describing the research carried

out by several Italian ethnomusicologists on music traditions outside of Italy, which began in the 1980s (see Leydi and Magrini 1982, Magrini 1982, Giannattasio 1983, Facci 1986-7, and Giuriati 1986-7).

In 1985 Facci became a member of *Missione Etnologica Italiana in Africa Equatoriale*, a multidisciplinary research group founded and directed by the Italian anthropologist Francesco Remotti; at the time, Facci was the only ethnomusicologist. It was within this group that she travelled to Africa between 1986 and 2008; first to the Congo, then Burundi, Tanzania and lastly Uganda. It is worth citing her reflections on fieldwork carried out at the beginning of turbulent and tragic times in the region; reflections in which Facci explains her approach to the study of the music traditions she encountered:

Because of family and work, my trips to Africa have always been rather short, of one or two months. Furthermore, because of the political turbulence in the area of the Great Lakes, where my research group was based, I often had to change the place and object of study . . . without being able to put down scientific and existential roots in any place. Thus, I remained an Italian ethnomusicologist (and I would add, a teacher) away from home who tried to interlace various and fortunate encounters with African music with a working, scientific, and didactic life, conducted essentially at home (quoted in Tuzi, 2014).

Facci's encounter with the *akazehe* was indeed a fortuitous one. The first time she accidentally heard *akazehe* she was in the archives of the Centre de civilization burundaise in Bujumbura. She remembers being taken by their overall sound, the voice of the women, and the complex rhythmic structure of these salutations. And she also remembers how the male researchers working in the archive told her that the *akazehe* was "not music" and deterred her from wasting time with them. Fortunately for us, Facci recognized a common trope which is all too familiar for those who study the music of women.

Facci's analysis of *akazehe* is grounded in the work of Jean Jacques Nattiez on the Inuit, and that of Simha Arom in Central Africa. Combining close musical analysis, focusing on vocal interlocking, with a perspective gained by her ethnographic experience and a multidisciplinary approach, Facci's understanding of *akazehe* as directly reflecting issues relevant to social organization is also indebted to John Blacking. Using critical insights, she proposes that women engaged in *akazehe* "force musical meaning into the verbal exchange," allowing for female creativity to emerge in a quotidian and intimate dimension. Nearly twenty-four years after its initial publication, Facci's article continues to be relevant for scholars of African music as well as for scholars who continue to engage with the music and the sound of women.

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Translator's Introduction—Alessandra Ciucci

One of the challenges of this translation was to retain the elegant writing of Serena Facci, as reflected in the second paragraph of the article, where Facci poetically conveys the first impression of listening to an *akazehe* and, at the same time, the structure of these greetings. In that paragraph, she writes about how the sonorous impact of the diaphony of *akazehe* was "avvolgente," using an adjective that in Italian has a sensuous connotation which posed some problems in translation. I opted for the term "engulfing" that, although devoid of the same sensuality, seems to reflect the physicality of being surrounded, of being embraced by sound. Similarly, I opted to translate the verb "inseguire"—which Facci uses in a reflexive form that emphasizes the idea of reciprocity (*si inseguono*), and that describes the way in which the two female voices interact with one another—as "follow one another."

The description of one key vocal technique in the original article, that of "inseguimento vocale," was rendered as "vocal chase." Despite the awkwardness I perceived in "vocal chase," it does closely translate the way in which Facci describes how the two voices closely engage with, and feed off of one another.

Finally, the long and complex sentence structure characteristic of Italian writing was often shortened in order to render the text more readable in English.

The *Akazehe* of Burundi: Polyphonic Interlocking Greetings and the Female Ceremonial

Among all the theories concerning the folk tradition of plurivocal singing, the one with greatest importance in my view is centered on the social dimension of the phenomenon; it approaches plurivocal singing first and foremost as a means of interaction at the intonational level.

(Zemtsovsky 1993:23)

The observation of the Russian scholar cited in the epigraph—taken from his original reflection on a rather widespread musical behavior that the scholar himself named “musical dialogy”—seems auspicious for this approach to the genre *akazehe* or *akayego* of Burundi. I had the chance to get to know this repertoire while conducting research in January 1993, through fieldwork significantly enriched by listening to the materials of the sound archive of the Centre de civilisation burundaise of Bujumbura, an archive from which some of the documents analyzed in this article are taken.¹

The sonorous impact of this diaphony on the listener is engulfing. Two voices in the same register—whispered, with an intimate timbre and a rather limited melodic material—follow one another with a rigorous regular pulsation. From the very first listening, the length of the performance and the treatment of the text indicate the relevance of the circumstances in which *akazehe* is used. Even though they are disappearing, *akazehe* greetings are practiced only by women. The “dialogic” character of this polyphony is intrinsic to the genre in that one cannot exchange greetings without a dialogue. But the poetic and particularly the musical quality of this characteristic type of greeting turns the dialogue into an interweaving form, with well-defined rules of superposition and exchange of roles. The combination of the voices in *akazehe* would place the genre, in formal terms, within the general family of polyphony from central Africa as described by Simha Arom (despite peculiarities to be addressed later).² The formal characteristics are its measured rhythm and its combinatorial process, consisting of *tuilage* (overlapping or tiling) and superimposed ostinatos. The social organization behind the vocal game reminds us of the ludic dimension of polyphony Jean-Jacques Nattiez described for the *katajjak* of the Inuit of Canada.³

Greeting one another in a traditional African society

Greeting is a daily ceremonial act. The encounter—with all its entailed relations and likely exchanges and interactions among participants—is marked by opening and closing greetings. Erving Goffman (1971) describes them as “ritual brackets” surrounding periods of heightened access. Formalities relative to greetings are conventionally defined in all of their components. Michael Argyle defines the greeting as a sequence “governed by social conventions, which direct both the verbal and the non-verbal aspects of behaviour” (1975:167)

In his *Introduzione all'etnolinguistica* (1976) Giorgio Cardona describes the communicative contents of the greeting in this way:

From the textual point of view, greetings are the necessary prologue to the conversation which will follow ... even though there is no semantic cohesion between greetings and conversation. Indeed, the semantic content of greetings is almost nonexistent; their aim it is not to introduce new semantic information, but rather to begin an interaction—they have a pragmatic aspect. . . . Greetings also have the important socio-linguistic function of declaring the role and reciprocal *status* of the interacting participants, aside from the general one of cathartic regulator of social relations. As a genre, the greeting always predicts someone who greets and someone who is greeted, equally active in the verbal exchange; the degree of complexity may vary from a minimum (A: “morning”, B: “morning”; A: “Hello!”, B: “Hello!”) to a maximum with numerous replies.⁴

From this definition by Cardona we can extrapolate some basic “ingredients” of the greeting which will be useful in the analysis of *akazehe*. At a semantic level, the greeting is situated in a neutral position and functions to reinforce social stability through equal participation in a verbal exchange. Cardona allows us to glimpse how this exchange is practically organized and to understand a whole universe of variance distinguishing the act of greeting in diverse cultures, in terms of *minimum* and *maximum* degrees of complexity.

In many African societies the ceremonial greeting is extremely articulated, and the act of greeting can achieve a high level of complexity. The status which is given to the greeting as a means to establish and define social relations is very high: “to greet is the first duty for a woman or man who is well-brought up One has always a good impression of someone who greets. His gesture demonstrates the respect and his consideration for his fellows. Not to greet, not to respond to greetings are blatant signs of rudeness and unpardonable pride” (Mabendy 1965:124).

In Africanist literature, types of greeting in diverse languages are categorized in terms of two criteria:

- a. The moment and the circumstance in which it occurs;
- b. The social role of the protagonists of the encounter.

Each moment of the day requires its own types of greeting. According to Geneviève Calame-Griaule (1965), among the Dogon the rigidity with which greetings are articulated in reference to time depends on the importance of the greeting’s content to a positive flow of time. A wrongly timed greeting is tantamount to an insult. The wishful content of a greeting serves to rework formulas at particular ceremonial moments. Mabendy describes greetings addressed in the Sahel during birth, marriage, death, initiation, commercial exchanges, the return from or the departure to a voyage, and so forth (1965).

The definition of the formulas according to age, social, or political status and eventually the caste of those who exchange the greeting is just as rigid. Judith Irvine (1974) details how status ranking among members of the castes of nobles and *griots* is meticulously sanctioned in Wolof greeting rituals. All the relational, verbal, and postural components of the precise ceremonial “script” tend to underline the differences in *status* among participants. Makokila Nanzanza refers to a corpus of eleven diverse formulas of welcome among the Bamanyaanga of Zaire that state the eldest one, who holds higher social status, should begin the greeting unless the youngest is

bestowed with an importance which needs to be taken into consideration (Nanzanza 1988). In Burundi too, and thus in the *akazehe*, the prerogative to begin the greeting evoking conditions of social parity is reserved for the eldest.

Two formal traits of greeting in Africa are particularly relevant to the aims of this study on the *akazehe* of Burundi: the prolonging of the exchange of greeting formulas far longer than in European cultures and the formalization of non-verbal traits—prosodics and proxemics. These establish a clear sonic and gestural difference between the *ceremonial time* of the greeting and the *prosaic time* of the normal dialogue:

[In the Sahel] nothing amazes the European more than this custom which necessarily precedes any speech Nothing will be said before the long litany of formulas is concluded A zone of peace that does not belong to anyone but that is yet familiar, this suspension is necessary so that the judgement can be issued and the motive of the encounter can be revealed. (Le Pichon 1991:26)

Dogon greetings are very fast (Calame-Griaule speaks of a “litany” or “rosary” of stereotyped questions and answers); but when listening one is particularly struck by the contrapuntal style and how musical time is respected with precision. After the formalities of the greeting, time changes and the interlocutors can begin to speak and laugh in a normal and relaxed way. (Cardona 1976:191-92)

The text which follows is a transcription and translation of a morning greeting exchanged by two Haya women (Tanzania) of different ages.

(C = call, R = response)

C – <i>Xolairota</i>	Good morning
R – <i>Mawe orailota</i>	Good morning
C – <i>Mulaile mutai?</i>	How are you? (for the morning)
R – <i>Tulaileo aho</i>	We are well
C – <i>Abato baraile bazai?</i>	How are the children?
R – <i>Balaileho aho</i>	They are well
C – <i>Bagumile?</i>	Are they well?
R – <i>Bagumile</i>	They are well
C – <i>Mutula ni bubonaki?</i>	What news after so long?
R – <i>Tutuboine kantu</i>	Nothing
C – <i>Maiko geikola</i>	Good work
R – <i>Ego naiwe maiko</i>	Good work to you
C – <i>Akajura mwakabona mutai?</i>	Have you seen the rain?
R – <i>Negwa muno</i>	Rains a lot
C – <i>Kyabalembaki?</i>	What has this day brought you?
R – <i>Bwakya</i>	The sunrise ⁵

The formulas recited in the verbal exchange contain three types of message:

- a. the greeting itself (*xolairota*, *mawe orailota*);
- b. the request of information;
- c. good wishes.

The moment of the day is expressed by the choice of appropriate formulas (*mulaile mutai*, *maiko geikola*). The social disparity between the two participants, following from the difference in their ages, explains the one-sidedness of the request for information: it always starts with the elder. A substantial element of interest, not reproduced in the transcription of the text, is also the manner in which the two women exchanged formulas: with rapid speech and an inexpressive tone of voice tending toward a monotone.

An analogous lack of expressivity was detectable in a long exchange of formulas among the Ganda of the Ssese Islands (Uganda).⁶ The greeting took place between an old woman, the homeowner, and a young male visitor. The woman initiated the formulas with a low and mechanical voice (in this case, the definition of “rosary” given by Calame-Griaule seems to be fitting) and the man responded by singing a long monosyllable (*mmmh*) whose pitch he varies. The exchange took place without the two participants looking at one another. The atmosphere was seemingly abstracted from the context, leaving the bystanders behind, still and waiting. Once the greeting was completed, the actual dialogue concerning the real reasons behind the visit began.

The extraverbal traits of the greeting unambiguously revealed the suspension of real time caused by the act of greeting. In this sense, the greeting conceals deeper meanings, becoming a temporal container isolated from the contingency of “this encounter.” The greeting can summarize or anticipate other encounters, remembered or foreseeable among the same people. Neutral at the semantic level, that is, in terms of what is actually said in the greeting (as Cardona maintains), the greeting may become dense with content relating to the social and affective relationship among the participants. Suspended in a non-real time frame, this relationship is ceremonially sanctioned or reaffirmed in its fullness beyond the contingency of the encounter, which may be full of uncertainty: “the restriction exercised by this impersonal register reveals an ineffable transcendental authority that has the effect of neutralizing the potential aggressiveness of those who are present, making it impossible for the particularities of the personalized discourse to emerge” (Le Pichon 1991:27).

The greeting in Burundi

In Kirundi, the verb to greet is generally translated with *kuramutsa*, from the root *-ramuts* (getting up in the morning) which is also common to the term *mwaramutse*, translatable as “good morning.” But in reality, the articulation of greetings is so rich that the relative terminology is considerably more complex. For example, in the case of saying goodbye, the parting word *kusezera* is used. According to Van der Burgt (1903), greeting the king was called *kushengera umwami*, “paying a visit to the king.” The greeting envisages a particular ceremony with specific formulas, prostration, and placement of grass at the king’s feet. Besides the king, leaders and notables of various ranks continue to be the recipients of particular types of greeting with their own specific terminologies. The ceremony associated with the encounter between important people will not be considered, since *akazehe* is a greeting between common people.⁷ In this regard it is important to note the difference between the verb *kuramutsa* and another verb used to translate the generic greeting: *kuramukanya*. In his Kirundi-French dictionary Firmin Rodegem

(1970) translates *kuramutsa* as to greet, to wish good morning, to visit, while *kuramukanya* is translated as greeting one another, to wish good morning to one another. More than anything else, the difference is in the different level of reciprocity in the greeting: in the case in which one pays a visit to someone in the morning, or arrives at work, the gesture of greeting is defined by the verb *kuramutsa*; whereas, if one runs into a friend in the street and exchanges a greeting, we are in a context defined by the verb *kuramukanya*. But in his study of the social life of the Rundi, Rodegem writes something more about this verb, describing greeting among women: “Women who meet along the path take each other’s hands, greet one another—[perform] *kuramukanya*—[or] hug one another—[perform] *kugwana munda*—if they are relatives. During this time, they exchange stereotyped good wishes or, at times, slip into a more personal mode” (Rodegem 1965:14).

Van der Burgt uses the term *kuramukanya*, together with others (*kugumanya*, *kuhana amasho*) to define a particularly profound greeting that is exchanged in case where the relationship is stronger. Here is his description:

When someone meets a relative, a friend, someone whom they know well . . . he starts by staring at him for a long time without saying a word (*kumwiketereza*, *kuraba*). After this, he approaches more closely (*kwegerana*) joining his hands together. The other person encloses the joining hands between his; then moves his hands closer, gently brushing (*kuramukanya*) the arms of the other with a continuous back and forth which starts from the shoulders and repeats (*kwengeranya*) at least ten times if not more. (Van der Burgt 1903:530)

During these repeated embraces the two participants exchange a series of stereotyped formulas, repeating each time: *Isho* or *sho*, a typical interjection of this greeting. *Isho* (pl. *amasho*) means herd. In this context, however, it turns into good wishes: may you have many cows, may you become rich. Many rhetorical and poetic forms of the Rundi refer to the cow and to its symbolic status of wealth and well-being; greetings follow the same rule.⁸ In contrast to Rodegem, who in the 1960s already deplored the disappearance of this greeting, at the beginning of the twentieth century Van der Burgt describes it as very common (among the Tutsi, to whom this greeting is attributed, but also among the Hutu and Twa), not only among women, but also among men. During the fieldwork I carried out in 1993, it was possible to closely observe one of these greetings among two older women in Gitega. It was defined as *ndamukanya* and it was described as a very intense greeting, aimed to seal such a profound relationship as that with a paternal aunt. In addition to employing the complexity of the gesture described by Van der Burgt, the women used a whispered but intense voice to recite the formulas rhythmically and with tight repetition. In this case too, the sonorous effect took on a particularly significant role.

(proposta)	shoshiri	shoshiri	shoshiri	shoshiri	ecc.
(risposta)	mmh!	mmh!	mmh!	mmh!	ecc.

The *shoshiri* exclamation contained in the call is composed of *sho* and *shiri*, probably from the verb *kushira* which means to put, to place, to deposit, or in the variant *kushîra*, to put back in one's own hands. The good wish of abundance is thus reinforced. The response predicts only a monosyllable of agreement, which is very common in dialogue.

Kuramukanya, thus, is a special way of greeting. The reciprocity and the apparent randomness inferable from Rodegem's definition are symptoms of the autonomy of this greeting; after the recitation one can begin the conversation, but one can also leave. Important is for the strength and the depth of the bond between two persons to be reiterated through a full-scale ceremonial gesture in which movements, sounds, and their rhythmic qualities are abstracted. I hypothesize that the *akazehe*, a sung greeting, is a product of this culture of greeting in which formal traits have taken over and broadened out to a wider field of meanings.

Akazehe: a salutation modulée

In their notes about Rundi greetings, neither Van der Burgt nor Rodegem discuss *akazehe*. Rodegem (1973), however, cites them in the anthology dedicated to an illustration of the rich oral tradition of Burundi, the epic and lyric genre. The custom to include the so-called *salutations modulées* in the classifications of traditional literary genres is, after all, rather common among Rundi scholars.⁹ Considered a poetic genre more than a formula of courtesy, the *akazehe* probably owes its place among poetic expressions to the richness of the form and content of the text. "From the point of view of the form [the *akazehe*] employs well-known stylistic principles, such as metaphor, metonym, alliteration, and repetition" (Ndimurwanko 1985-6:26).

But what must have mostly influenced the judgments of scholars is the appreciation of this synthesis between the spoken and the musical, which turns these greetings into an expressive event clearly identifiable in the cultural panorama of the Rundi: "These recitatives pursue the same goal: lyricism, which manifests itself in a personal or collective emotion expressed in a plaintive, undulating, whispered or sung melody" (16).

At this point it is necessary to emphasize that, as often happens in oral tradition, the poetic genres which are the subject of the classifications we have already mentioned have a musical configuration: the pastoral poems *ibicuba* are sung, as are the lullabies *ibihozo* and the festive repertoire *imvyino*; the *inanga*, the epic and panegyric genre par excellence, is whispered and accompanied by the trough-zither, the true national instrument; the tales *ibitito* are characterized by a strong rhythm in the recitative and the numerous sung refrains; the praise poems *amazina*, the testing grounds of the young aristocrats, have a rhythmic sensibility based on the performer's ability to rapidly pronounce a great number of verses in one breath and, even though recited, they are characterized by clearly descending sung lines sketched by a voice with strong intensity. Without getting into one of the most debated issues in studies of orality (where music and language specialists have often been on opposite sides in defining the balance between words and musical sounds in the most diverse musico-poetic repertoires), and remaining within the confines of Burundi, it is necessary to point out that the same Rodegem sensed the importance of the musical component in the refined Rundi rhetorical art, even though he declared himself to be incapable of taking it into account: "There is no discontinuity between the rhythm of the words and those of the instruments or dances; the art of knowing how to speak is principally a question of rhythm. But how is one to write down what the performance adds to the text?" (Rodegem 1973:15).

The most important work available on the *akazehe*, the already-cited Ndimurwanko (1985-6), does not contain many allusions to the musical content of the corpus examined (fourteen greetings), whose texts are integrally written down and analyzed. The main objective of Isaac Ndimurwanko is to verify the “femininity” of the *akazehe*: “The aim of our analysis will be to verify the link between this genre and the feminine world, and to judge what society owes to feminine nature as such” (8).

The process is interesting, since there are many signs that the *akazehe*, practiced only by women, belongs to the kind of “separate” feminine world that is prominent in interlacustrine societies. In traditional Rundi societies, in fact, the code of behavior, centered on modesty and discretion, provides severe rules for women, who are supposed to show subordination to men. At the age of puberty, a girl is *umuzazwanzu*, that is to say, she is responsible for the house. She is also *umunyakigo*, meaning one who must remain in the courtyard behind the house (107-8). Once married, the bride becomes part of the husband’s family. From that moment on, the load of daily chores and responsibilities becomes burdensome and the young woman is obliged to establish a tight relationship with her mother- and sisters-in-law, a relationship which is not always free of conflicts. The relationship with the external world is instead reserved for the man. In the presence of the head of the family, the women (wives and daughters) cannot talk to guests and strangers: *inkokokazi ntibika isake iriho* or “the hen cannot sing in front of the rooster” (Rodegem 1965:6).

Ndimurwanko traces a series of messages in the formulas of greetings. These messages betray the malaise of women, turning the *akazehe* into a sort of ritualized safety-valve. The *akazehe* are analogous to bridal lamentations in many cultures, for instance, where women are expected to be submissive.¹⁰ From his analysis of the corpus are extrapolated ten units of thematic priority, statistically defined and drawn from the recurrence of some specific formulas:

1. Friendship among women

<i>Ahari abakobwa</i>	There, where there are girls
<i>Baraja inama</i>	They speak among themselves
<i>Urubuka ka kayago</i>	Remember this chat

2. Domestic activity

<i>Mu nzira ija gusenya</i>	When we go look for wood to burn
<i>Mu nzira ija kuvoma</i>	When we go fetch the water
<i>Ni ako gutega</i>	I start cooking
<i>Ni ako kwahira</i>	I start picking up the grass

3. Rules of behavior

<i>Gucaruka, sha</i>	To leave the house, dear to me
<i>Gosokora</i>	To exit
<i>Ivyo ni umuziro</i>	It is forbidden

4. One own's family of origin

<i>Nzogashira senge</i>	I will tell my aunt
<i>Na muramwawe</i>	Your brother-in-law
<i>Iyo data alazombona</i>	There, where my father will no longer see me

5. The situation in the new family

<i>Kwa nyokobukwe</i>	In the house of your mother-in-law
<i>Na muramwawe</i>	And of your brother-in-law
<i>Na muramukazawe</i>	And of your sister-in-law
<i>Ijisho ni irihe</i>	They look at you with "that look"
<i>Abagabo bari kwinshi</i>	Husbands are of a different temper

6. The way of dressing

<i>Yambaye iki, sha</i>	What are you wearing my dear?
<i>Nzotira agahuzu</i>	I will prepare a dress

7. The new ambience which is hostile

<i>Mu ntara utabaye</i>	In a region you do not know
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8. The new characters

<i>Aravugiriza</i>	She (the mother-in-law) complains
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9. The woman left alone working in the fields

<i>Isuka ni jewe</i>	It is only me who takes the hoe
<i>Nawa ni agatahe</i>	And he takes his judge's baton

10. Wishes

<i>Horaho tuyage</i>	May you live long, let's talk
<i>Horaho sha</i>	May you live long, my dear
<i>Gira ibibondo n'abagenzi</i>	May you have children and friends ¹¹

But the "femininity" of the *akazehe* is not only registered internally in the content of the texts. On the exterior, rules characterizing feminine behavior are also translated into controlled gestural attitudes and expressed by a delicate and subdued way of speaking. This type of gesturality and vocality is found both in the *akazehe* and in other exclusively feminine genres tied to the quotidian (lullabies, work songs—with a eurhythmic function—to grind manioc or to prepare butter). These private and intimate manifestations of feminine expressivity insert themselves in a world "apart," from which men are excluded. Women's vocal production and performance style in public repertory where women participate, sometimes even as protagonists, is remarkably different from this "feminine" style.¹² In the public cases, women's voices are intense,

“thrusting” from a low register into a higher tessitura. The intimate, “feminine” chants are by contrast performed with a low voice, in a tessitura which is not very high, and with the occasional use of yodeling.

Akazehe: vocal chase

According to all the interviews and relevant literature, there are no special occasions for performing *akazehe*. An encounter, casual or motivated by a visit which may occur at any time during the day, is enough for two women, friends or relatives, to perform sung greetings.¹³

The two female performers have a straight posture. When they meet they get close to one another so as to reciprocally place one or both arms on the forearms or on the shoulders of their companion. Their heads are next to one another, their faces turned to the same direction or opposite, but no matter what, their glances never meet. Once they have assumed this posture the performance may begin and it can last for several minutes. Throughout this time the women maintain a statue-like stillness. The movements that they do exhibit—lip activity and in some cases forearm caresses—are highly controlled (Ndimurwanko 1985-6:87). Only the end of the chant allows for the bound position to unravel and give way to other gestures of greeting: more caresses of the forearms (as in the *kuramukanya*) as well as hand-shakes, conventional greetings, smiling and laughing.

The performance follows a precise script. Its two parts are distinguished by a fixed alternation between call (C) and response (R):

C – <i>Yambu yambu ga mwana wanje</i>	Hello, hello, my daughter
R – <i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, yes my dear
C – <i>Yambu yambu niwewe maronko</i>	Hello, hello, you are my wealth
R – <i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, yes my dear
C – <i>Ni wewe ga inganza mihigo</i>	You are the winner of challenges
R – <i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, yes my dear
C – <i>Ni wewe ga mwana wa mama</i>	You are, my sister
R – <i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, yes my dear
C – <i>Ndakubonye ninaza iwawa</i>	I meet you, if I come to you
R – <i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, yes my dear

The melody reflects the roles of the two female singers: the melodic part of the one who calls is movable and varied; the melody of response is an ostinato pattern. Three female performers of *akazehe*, Marie Madeleine Ndayawugwa, Anoncetia Banzira and Charlotte Ruhisi, interviewed in Gitega in 1993, have defined the two parts with the verbs *gutera* and *kwakira*.

Gutera, used for the part of the person who commences and pronounces the variable phrases, means to throw or launch. This represents the act of proposing the *incipit* of the singing. *Kwakira* is the part of the person who responds. Literally, it means to accept what is offered, to take. The complementarity with *gutera* is thus apparent. *Kwakira* is a verb also used in other musical contexts: in the practice of the *inanga* zither, for example, *kwakira* refers to the left-hand part of melodic formulas. The low notes in the *kwakira* part combine with the right-hand part to form complete melodic formula.¹⁴ A secondary meaning of *kwakira* is to mate or to embrace in sexual union. The semantic field of this verb is therefore marked by reciprocity, the collaboration of two elements. The two parts interact and at the same time establish a hierarchy of roles. The

role of *gutera*, in fact, is to set up the possibility of great flexibility in the *kwakira* part, and to conduct the polyphonic game.

Characteristic of the sung greetings is also the obligatory alternation of the two roles. The timing of this alternation is not predetermined but rather signaled by some conventional phrases. The older of the two singers, who is performing the call, switches to perform the response and vice versa. This can occur after a brief interruption or, more often, in the course of continuous performance. *Kwakiranwa* is the verb used to indicate the exchange of parts; it means to take turns in carrying the load (in Burundi, as in the whole area, women are the ones who carry loads most of the time). The sense of reciprocity emphasized by the terms *gutera* and *kwakira* is further strengthened by the use of the term *kwakiranwa*, which connotes mutual help. The formulas used in the *gutera* part to begin the exchange reinforces this theme of mutual assistance:

Nyakira mugenzi wanje

Take me back (come to help me) my dear

Ndakwitabire, ntako nkurusha
Ndakwakire, sinkwaka amatungo

I listen to you, I no longer have anything of yours
I come to help you, I do not want to take your
wealth

The following example is a transcription of an *akazehe* recorded in Rutana in 1993. The transcription ends after the first part of the performance, when the two performers, Domine Mbomirema and Brigitte Nkwirikiye, paused briefly before exchanging roles.

The transcription is an octave higher than the original ambitus, which is Sol² - Re³.

Example 1. *Akazehe* recorded in the vicinity of Rutana, January 1993.

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

P
 aa yambu yambu ga mwana wanje yambu yambu niwewe maronko
 R
 ego ye - go ego ma-ma ego ye - go ego ma-

P
 ni wewe ga inganza mihigo ni wewe ga mwana wa mama
 R
 -ma ego ye - go ego ma-ma ego ye - go ego ma-

P
 ndabukonje ninazaiwawe ninez'i - wawe nsang'ari wewe ga -
 R
 -ma ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ye -

P
 mwana wama gir'ivyurya nivy'uh'uwawawe gir'incu-ti gir'
 R
 go a-ma-le - mbe ego ye - go ego ma-ma ego ye -

P
 umu - genzi nayu - mugenzi ndakubonye gi-
 R
 go ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ma-ma ego ye

P
 -ra so wawe ndasubira nsanga ni wewe ndakubaze mu -
 R
 -go ego ma-ma m - - - ego ma-ma a-maho

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

P
-hir'lwanyu mugenzi wawe ibibondo vyawe mubane neza
R
-ro ama - lem - be ama - ho - ro a - malem - be ego yam-

P
ngo ni vyiza bizanye i - bindi ngo na jewe ba - reso - ho - ka
R
-bo m - ego ma - ma ego ye - go ego ma-

P
nabi nabi bi - dashe - meje jewe nyene ntibi - she - meje
R
- ma ego ye - go ego ma - ma ego ye - go ego ma-

P
ngo nara je nda senga Yezu Yezu K - ristu ngo wobo - nana
R
ma ego ye - go ama ho - ro ama - lem - be ego ma-

P
noneho sha turabo - nanye gir'icurya ntic'uh'u - wa - we
R
- ma ego ye - go ego ma - ma ego ye - go ego ma-

P
gir'incuti gir'umu - genzi nay - umugenzi
R
- ma ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ye -

1 2 3 2 3 1 2 3 2 3

P
gir'ubumwe gir'ama - lembe gir'incuti yambu yambu ga
R
- ma ego ye - go ego ma - ma ego ye -

P
nyakubaho nyakubaho nanje nkabaho nyakuramba na -
R
- go ego ma - ma ego ye - go ego ma - ma ego ye -

P
nje nkaramba gir'umwiza gir'ama - lembe ngo nara je nda -
R
- go ego ma - we ego ye - go a - malem - be ego ye -

P
saba Yesu Yesu K - ristu ngo wobonana none hosha tu -
R
- go a malem - be a maho - ro ego ma - we ngotuya -

P
- rabonanye ngo tuyage sa twuvi - kane ngo tuyage tu -
R
ge ego ma - we ego ye - go ego ma - we ego ye -

P
gwane munda vyar'uheke n'invyza vyose gir'inzira i -
R
- go ego ye - go ego ye - go ego ma - ma ego ye -

1 2 3 1 2 3 2 3 2 3

P -ror'iwawe iyiror'i - wanyu i - ratunganye ama - horo ga

R go : ego ye : go ego ye : go ama - lem - be ego ye

P mwana wanje ingo mwiza ngo ndakuba - ze ndakubaze ngo

R go ama - lem - be ego ye : go ego ma - ma ego ye

P abanyu bose abagenzi bawe ngo mugendana kw'incuti zose ko

R : go ego ye : go ego ye : go ego ye : go ego ye

P baso - hoka ngo na jewe ni nkuko nyano ninashika mu-

R : go ego ma - ma ego ye : go ego ma - ma ego ye -

P -hir'iwacu umve mwiza ndakwitumire ngo niwashiki - mu-

R go ama - ho - ro ego ye : go ego ye : go ego ye

P -hir'iwanyu i - ra - tunganye uga - nutse ngwabaganutsa

R - go ego ye - go ego ma - we m - - - - - ego ma -

2 3 2 3 2 3 2 3

P baganuza wi-sigi-reho ngo na jewe ninashi-kii-mu-
R -ma a-ma-le-mbe ego ye go ego ma-
P hiri-vacu ngo ndaganutsa a-baganutsa baganuza ni-
R -go ego ye-go ego ye-go ego ma-we ego ye-
P sigi-reho ngo ndamutse nakoga-toya ndakwita-bire nta-
R -go ego ma-ma ego ye-go ego ye-go ego ye-
P -co nkurusha se-e-e he
R -go ego ye-go he

Audio of *akazehe* in Example 1. Performed by singers Domine Mbomirena and Brigitte Nkwirikiye. Recorded on DAT in Rutana, February 1993.

Hello, hello, my daughter / Hello, hello, you are my wealth / You are the winner of challenges / It is you, my sister / I will see you if I come to you / I will find that it is you my sister / May you have something to eat and everything else to give to the person dear to you / May you have relatives and a companion / I see you, cheers to your fathers / I repeat, I find that it is you / I ask about yours at home, of your companion / May you live in harmony with your children / They are goods added to others / Even by me, they live / Not that bad / I too am not that bad / I came and prayed to Jesus, to Jesus Christ for us to see one another / And now, dear, we have seen one another / May you have something to eat and everything else to give to the person dear to you / May you have parents and a companion / While those who love quarrels create deceits / May you live in union / May you have guests / May you have relatives / May you have a companion / May you have good health and a long life / May you live and I too / May you live long and I too / May you have goodness and serenity / I came, prayed to Jesus, to Jesus Christ / In order to see one another / And now dear, we have seen one another / And now let's talk with a good mutual understanding / Let's talk while hugging one another / May you bring children to the world / and carry them on your back. Everything is good / May you take the road that goes to your home / The one that goes to yours is the right road / Peace upon you my daughter / Come dear so that I ask you / so that I ask if all of yours / the friends you frequent and all the relatives are well / It is the same for me as well / When I arrive at our home / I will convey the greetings / Listen dear to my message / When you arrive at your home / convey greetings to those who convey them [to you] / I will not pay attention to the guardian of the royal drum / I will greet the little one too, I listen to you, I no longer have anything of yours.

The pitches used by the two voices (G-A-B-D) are built on a pentatonic system. Pentatonic scales are quite widespread in Burundi: the national instrument, the *inanga* zither, for example, is tuned to five notes. In this case the narrowness of the ambitus should be noted. Both voices move within the range of the same fourth and share melodic material, although the response uses only three notes (G-A-B). The common tonic of G serves as a clear gravitational center in the response and is the unison note on which the performance ends. The formulas of the call, which ends on A, give a circular movement to the melody, so as to favor the process of *ad libitum* in the performance.

Rhythmically speaking, in both the call and the response, the melody unfolds over a ternary cycle that correlates noticeably with the metric structure of the verse.

In this type of *akazehe* the words in the call are articulated over (mostly) nine-syllable verses, which are divided into hemistiches of four-plus-five. The repeating eight-syllable response is divided into four-plus-four units with alternating longs and shorts:

ēgǒ yēgǒ //			ēgǒ māmă

1	2	3	1	2	3

As one can see, the correspondence between the cycle of the musical rhythm and the quantitative cycle of the verse is not precise. One hears the long syllable *e-* in *ego* as slightly longer than the short syllable *-go*. In order not to crowd the graphic representation, however,

eighth-note duplets are used for both. Implicit in this type of transcription is the notion that the major accentuation of the first sound also conveys the idea of slight elongation.¹⁶

More relevant to this melodic analysis is the division of the verse in two parts. The caesura corresponds to a clear pause and gives rise to the articulation of the melody in two segments which we will call *a/b* in the call and α/β in the response. The singer performing the call has the prerogative to construct the melody by combining segments *a* and *b* and two variants that cadence D-A. The variants derive from *a*: *a1* rhythmically adapts itself to the first part of the verse, and *a2b*, rhythmically similar to *b*, adapts itself to the second part of the verse. The *b* segment, where the tonic is repeated, has its own autonomous configuration without variants. The response singer does not perform variations on segment α , which cadences on A, and segment β which ends on the tonic G. In the transcription of example 1A, it is possible to distinguish the four basic segments *a*, *b*, α , β and the two variants of *a*.

Example 1A. *Akazehe* recorded in the vicinity of Rutana, January 1993. Transcription of the first formula and of the melodic variants.

The image displays a musical transcription of a call-and-response formula. It consists of four staves. The first staff, labeled 'P' (Call), shows a melody with two segments: 'a' (first half) and 'b' (second half). The second staff, labeled 'R' (Response), shows a melody with two segments: α (first half) and β (second half). Below the 'R' staff, the text 'varianti di P' (variants of P) is written. The third staff, labeled '1', shows a variant of segment 'a', labeled 'a1'. The fourth staff, labeled '2', shows a variant of segment 'b', labeled 'a2b'. The notation includes treble clefs, eighth notes, and rests, with brackets indicating the boundaries of the segments and variants.

Example 1B. Table of the melodic concatenation and of the relations between the two voices. This is a schematic representation of the melodic segments in succession.

a b α β	a1 a2b a2b b α α α β	a1 a2b a2b b α α α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a1 a2b a2b b α α α β	a1 a2b a2b a2b a2b b α α α α α β
a1 a2b a2b a2b b α α α α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a1 a2b a2b b α α α β	a b α β	a a2b a2b a2b b α α α α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a1 a2b a2b a2b b α α α α β	a b α β	a1 a2b a2b a2b b α α α α β
a b α β	a1 a2b a2b b α α α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	a1 a2b a2b a2b b α α α α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	a b α β
a b α β	a b α β	

The basic combination *a/b* alternates with the concatenation of *a1* and *a2b*. The latter delays the arrival of the tonic and creates a fast-paced effect. It should be noted how this effect is reinforced in the response by analogous concatenations of α . In constructing the melody, therefore, the singer who performs the response follows the choices of the companion singer.

We now come to some observations about polyphonic practice. Characteristic of the *akazehe* is the temporal non-alignment of the two parts as in a canon. The two melodies that, as we observed, have significant common qualities (mode, ambitus, tonic, rhythmic period, articulation in two segments) are enunciated by the two singers in rigorous succession. Furthermore, the entrance of the response is off-beat in relation to the period of the call. The cycles of the two voices, rhythmically similar in terms of their regularly recurring accents, overlap one another without apparent points of encounter.

The following are transcriptions of the first phrase along with some of its variations and tables of the melodic sequence of three *akazehe* sharing the same model.

The character and construction of the melody remain similar in the four examples despite the differences in the number and type of variants. For the goals of our analysis, it is important to note some practices common to this small corpus.

1. The melodies result from concatenation of short segments. One segment, termed *a* in the call and α in the response, functions to generate tension; the function of the tonic is in *b* or β , where it creates release.
2. The *a* segment appears in variations.
3. The singer performing the call constructs the melody and proposes sequences more-or-less longer than *a* before ending with *b*.
4. The responding singer begins with a cycle equal in length but out of alignment with the call. She then proceeds to combine melodic segments so as to respect the choices of her companion. In particular, the call of segment *b* always corresponds with a response of β .
5. The two voices use common melodic material (mode, ambitus, rhythmic cycle) but are superimposed out of alignment and at times off-beat.

The nuances of this polyphonic practice lend themselves to interpretation. The repetition of the melodic formulas, for example, could be considered a form of superposition of ostinatos with variations—a form very common in central Africa (Arom 1985). The responsorial form gradually gives way to overlapping responses and then to more complex overlapping and tiling—that is, *tuilage* (Zemtsovsky 1993). If, however, one pauses to consider the fact that a common set of materials is presented, offset in time, it is impossible not to think about the canon, understood as a technique in which one voice follows another.

Example 2A. *Akazehe*, sound archive of the Centre de civilization burundaise. Transcription of the first formula and its melodic variants.

The image displays musical notation for a piece titled *Akazehe*. It features two staves at the top, labeled 'P' and 'R'. Staff 'P' contains a melodic line with two bracketed sections labeled 'a' and 'b'. Staff 'R' contains a corresponding line with two bracketed sections labeled 'α' and 'β'. Below these, the text 'varianti di P' is followed by seven numbered staves (1-7) showing variations of the melody. Each variation is labeled with a specific notation: 1 (a1), 2 (a2), 3 (a3b), 4 (a4b), 5 (a5b), 6 (a6), and 7 (a7). The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various note values and rests.

Example 2B. Table of the melodic concatenation and of the relationships between the two voices in the preceding *akazehe*.

a	b
α	β

a	b
α	β

a ₁	a ₂	a _{3b}	a ₂	a _{3b}	a ₂	a _{4b}	b
α	α	β	α	β	α	α	β

a	b
α	β

a	b
α	β

a ₁	a ₂	a ₂	a ₂	a _{3b}	b
α	β	β	β	α	β

a	b
α	β

a ₄	b
α	β

a ₄	b
α	β

a ₄	b
α	β

a ₄	b
α	β

a ₄	a ₁	a _{4b}	a _{4b}	a _{3b}	b
α	β	α	α	β	β

a	b
α	β

a	b
α	β

a	b
α	β

a ₁	a ₁	a ₁	a ₁	a ₁	a ₁	b
α	β	β	α	α	α	β

Example 3A. *Akazehe*, sound archive of the Centre de civilization burundaise. Transcription of the first formula and its melodic variants.

The image displays musical notation for a Burundian melody. At the top, two staves are labeled 'P' and 'R'. Staff 'P' contains a melodic line with a bracket labeled 'a' over the first four notes and a bracket labeled 'b' over the next four notes. Staff 'R' contains a similar melodic line with a bracket labeled 'α' over the first four notes and a bracket labeled 'β' over the next four notes. Below these, the text 'varianti di P' is written. Four numbered staves (1, 2, 3, 4) show variations of the melody. Staff 1 is labeled 'a1' and shows a variation of the first four notes. Staff 2 is labeled 'a2b' and shows a variation of the first four notes. Staff 3 is labeled 'a3b' and shows a variation of the first four notes. Staff 4 is labeled 'a4b' and shows a variation of the first four notes. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various note values including eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests.

Example 3B. Table of the melodic concatenation and of the relationships between the two voices in the preceding *akazehe*.

a b α β	a b α β
a ₁ a _{3b} a ₁ a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a β β α α α α α α α	a b α β
a _{3b} a ₁ a _{4b} a a _{3b} a _{3b} a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α α α	a b α β
a _{3b} a a _{4b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} α α α α α α α α α	a b α β
a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α α α	a b α β
a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{2b} a _{3b} b α α α α α α β	a a a _{2b} a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α α α
a b α β	a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α α α
a b α β	a _{3b} a a _{2b} a _{3b} a _{4b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} α α α α α α α α α
a b α β	a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α α α
a b α β	a _{3b} a a _{2b} a _{3b} b α α α α β
a b α β	a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a α α α α α α α β α
a b α β	a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{2b} α α α α β α α α α
a b α β	a _{3b} a a _{3b} a a _{3b} a _{3b} a a _{2b} α β α β α α α β
a b α β	a _{3b} b α β
a b α β	

Example 4A. *Akazehe* recorded near Gitega, January 1993. Transcription of the first formula in which is included the melodic variant *al*.

Example 4B. Table of the melodic concatenation and of the relationships between the two voices of the preceding *akazehe*.

a a ₁ b
α α β
a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ b
α α α α α α β
a b
α β
a b
α β
a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ b
α α α α α β β β β β α α β
a b
α β
a b
α β
a a ₁ a a ₁ a a ₁ b
α α α α α β β

During my 1993 fieldwork, I had the opportunity to try singing the response of an *akazehe*. The woman who performed the call gave me the crucial suggestion that I not listen to her singing, lest I get lost. In other words, because the objective was to not stop singing, it became essential for each one to move forward without any hesitation. At times, a similar suggestion is given to beginners who join choirs, particularly in the performances of canons. But the rule of not stopping is also the essence of a game that is dear to children, which consists of simultaneously singing different pieces, attempting not to be thrown off by the melody and the rhythm of the other. Polyphony, after all, is also a way to test ourselves and our companions, challenging our vocal qualities and our perceptive capacities all at once.

To not stop singing, therefore, is the principal aim of *akazehe*. However, at a higher level of mastery and interaction among the protagonists, the singers pursue the more sophisticated objective of following one another. One must shape one's own melody taking into account the choices made by one's companion. This compels the two participants to listen to each other with great attention. Those who enunciate the response must listen carefully as they respect the melodic concatenations of the call, superimposing the melodic segments α upon a and β upon b .

The technique of vocal chase turns the *akazehe* into a simple and pure form of polyphony. The event, despite the simplicity of the materials used, presents itself as a heterorhythmic and polytextual superposition. One's perception is influenced by the horizontality of the flow. It is easy to isolate and follow one voice or the other, but it becomes considerably more complex to listen to the superposition and catch, for example, some intervals or determine rhythmic connections.

The analysis carried out in this article is limited to only one type of *akazehe* (also called *akayego*, with an allusion to the text of the response), of which a number of examples were available. In the corpus analyzed and in other testimonials, however, it was possible to detect other styles, which differed in melodic organization and metric structure of text. The transcription of the initial formulas below is meant to expand the available documentation.

Example 5. *Akazehe*, sound archive of the Centre de civilization burundaise. Transcription of the incipit.

P

na - ko na - ko gu - se - nya na - ko kuvo - ma

R

hishasa hisasa hisasa hisasa hisasa hisasa

ecc

Example 6. *Akazehe*, sound archive of the Centre de civilization burundaise. Transcription of the incipit of the second part.

In contrast to the metric, melodic and rhythmic point of view, the polyphonic practice of these *akazehe* is held in common with the model previously analyzed. The temporal disalignment between the two parts, the polytextuality, and aim of singing without stopping, are also found in these models. This fact suggests that “vocal chase” is the characteristic trait of sung greetings.

Greeting one another: spending time, creating together

“The *akazehe*? But that is not music.” A Murundi who knew that I was researching traditional music was quite surprised at my interest in women’s sung greetings. The creation of *akazehe* is not defined with verbs commonly used for the act of singing, *kuririmba* or *kuvyina* but, rather, with those of speaking: *kuvuga akazehe*, that is to say, *to say akazehe*. According to Rodegem (1970) the root *-zehe* is also that of the verb *kuzihora* which means to chat. In other words, it would seem that the principal contexts to which it is possible to trace this expressive form are those of “speeches” rather than “musical sounds.” After all, the sonorous quality of sung greetings does not make an insignificant contribution to the whole. These greetings bring to mind the vocal games of the Canadian Inuits (Nattiez 1989). The *katajjak* too, like the *akazehe*, are not considered music by the protagonists, but are nevertheless born from a formidable system of organized sounds and in particular, interlocking parts. Nattiez states that even if they are primarily “games,” the *katajjak* cannot solely be reduced to their “ludic aspect” (173).

The *akazehe*, in turn, cannot be reduced solely to a speech component or to the act of sealing an encounter. There is an inherently ludic aspect expressed, for example, in smiling or laughing at the end of a performance. The polyphonic chase presents itself as a precise game of rules, whose outcomes give birth to an experience which gradually develops, depending on the options put into place by the protagonists following a typical procedure of the game. What differentiates the ludic content of Burundi greetings from vocal games is the lack of competitive finality. In the *akazehe* everything seems to compete toward a harmonious combination, toward the celebration of an understanding. All the words express reciprocal affection—the happiness of having found each other again, complicity—and the same performance practice is entrenched with solidarity: a voice launches the message (*gutera*), and chooses phrases and melodic variants, taking on, thereby, the pleasure-duty to “conduct the game” through improvisation; the other picks up the

message (*kwakira*), adapting to the choices of the companion, “keeping them in the game.” This alternation continues until the parts are inverted (*kwakiranwa*) and the leading role passes on to the second singer. The exchange is proposed by the enunciator of the call, using a stereotyped formula that underlines the parity of participants: *ntako nkurusha* (“I’m not older than you;” “I do not want to compete with you”). The companion then takes the place of the caller and immediately responds using calming phrases: *ngo hinge ndakwakire; oya mawe sak’amatungo* (“now I will come to your help;” “no dear, I’m not interested in your wealth”).

The synonyms of *akazehe*, or the other definitions used for sung greetings¹⁷ widen the range of meanings ascribed to this genre:

- a. *akayego*: the root *-yego* is a sign of consent and it is used also in *uruyego* which means scream out of joy.
- b. *akahibongozo*: according to Rodegem, it means beautiful voice, beautiful melody, but also a success, a masterwork and it derives from the verb *guhibongoza*, that is, to perfect, to do something with elegance.

The protagonists of *akazehe*, therefore, chat, exchange formulas of good wishes and information in stereotypical fashion, as happens in greetings, but in an atmosphere of joy and complicity (*akayego*)—and in particular, creating their masterwork (*akahibongozo*) in a beautiful and elegant way. “Because it is not ‘ordinary life’ [the game] is outside of the process of the immediate satisfaction of needs and desires. It interrupts that process. It introduces itself like a provisional action which ends in itself, and it is followed with the love of the satisfaction which is present in the same performance” (Huizinga 1964:28 [English translation of Italian edition]).

This definition of “game” fits sung greetings. We have said that greeting is also a way of suspending “ordinary life,” to stop time, to reconfirm interpersonal relations, safeguarding it from the risks of the encounter.

The *akazehe* is all of this. It is essentially a greeting among people who are equal. The solidarity reconfirmed within it makes the feminine world united and impermeable to the outside. But, as has been said, it goes beyond this function common to other types of greeting. The women engaged in *akazehe* fill the “suspended” time dedicated to the greeting as a creative activity. The dialogue becomes ludic interaction, *agon*, in the etymologic sense of game and hobby (Huizinga 1964:231; Zemtsovsky 1993:23-4). This forces musical meaning into the verbal exchange. The resulting polyphonic practice channels the participants’ cooperative activity toward common aesthetic ends (Lortat-Jacob 1996). The sung greeting becomes an expressive means of high value. The creativity and artistic skill in this intimate and hidden feminine world find space for expression even in such a quotidian context.

APPENDIX

Transcription and translation of the texts¹⁸

Example 2

Response

<i>Ego yego, ego maa</i>	Yes, yes, dear
<i>Ego yego nyakubaho</i>	Yes, yes, may you live long
<i>Gir'amahoro</i>	Peace to you
<i>Gir'amahoro</i>	Peace to you
<i>Ngo nkubaze umugenzi wawe</i>	Now I ask you, your companion
<i>Yaguciye ince</i>	who took away your virginity
<i>Umbarire ko yisohora</i>	Tell me if he is well
<i>Koasohoka</i>	If he is in good health
<i>Umukobwa muto ga nyakubaho</i>	That ill-mannered girl, long life to you
<i>Umwe shahu ga nyakubaho</i>	That one, dear, long life to you
<i>Ngo nkubaze nkubazagize</i>	I want to ask you, with many questions
<i>Muvyeyi wacu ya twibarutse</i>	Our relative who created us
<i>Ndakwibarize ko yosohora</i>	I want to ask you if he is in good health
<i>Yuko asohoka ga nyakubaho</i>	If he is in good health, long life to you

<i>Maze imisi tutabonana</i>	It is days we do not see each other
<i>Erega mwiza ingo tuyage</i>	Now, therefore, my beautiful, let's chat
<i>Ngo tuyage</i>	Let's chit-chat

<i>Bacana munda mukobwa muto</i>	That ill-mannered girl, gives you a stomachache
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Example 3

Response:

<i>Ego yego, mwana wa ma</i>	Yes, yes, my sister
<i>Nanje nyene ngusabire</i>	And I will pray for you
<i>Genda neza (in the last part)</i>	Safe travels

Call:

<i>Yambu neza se wa kyago</i>	Hello, nice woman with whom I converse
<i>Yambu neza se wa kyago</i>	Hello, nice woman with whom I converse
<i>Jewe manye ngo nsaba Imana</i>	I prayed to God a lot
<i>Nsaba Mana ngo tubonane</i>	I prayed to God that we could meet
<i>None raba turabonye</i>	And there we have met
<i>Ndakubonye kiyago canje</i>	I met you dear woman with whom I converse

Twenga neza ko ndakubonye
Simb'imanga nkasimba iyindi

 Make a beautiful smile, now that I have met you
 May you jump the gorge, and the same for me

Usa neza, usa na mwaka
Usa neza, usa na mwaka
Usa neza, usa n'inyange
Za nyange, z'i Makebuko
Se nyakuramba

 You are beautiful, beautiful like a cow
 You are beautiful, beautiful like a cow
 You are beautiful, beautiful like the white heron
 one of the herons of Makebuko
 long life to you

Yambu neza ga shalu wanje
Ingo neza ndakwibarize
I muhira mbe muragumye?
Muragumye murisohora?

Hello, hello, my dearest
 Come that I want to ask you
 if you are doing well at home
 Are you well? In good health?

Ngo nkubaze ca kiroroge
mugenzi wawe ko yisohora
Yambu neza se mwiza wanje
yambu neza ngwino tuyage
Ngo tuyage dushire hamwe
Tushire hamwe ntako turapfa
se mwiza wanje
Ngo ndi hafi kuguha yambu
Yambu neza se nyakuramba
Genda neza wi fate neza
Genda neza ushike I muhira
Urabatasha ubaganutse
Nagasaga wisigir'aho
Nagasaga ngende neza
Nk'igipfungu co mu gitongo
Uragenda amahoro meza
Uratasha ba banganutza
Banganuza wisigireho
Ugenda neza Se nyakuramba

To ask if he is well
 your ill-mannered friend
 Hello, hello my beautiful
 Hello, hello come here, let's chat
 Let's chat in good harmony
 In harmony because we have never
 disagreed, my beautiful
 I'm about to say goodbye
 Goodbye, goodbye, long life to you
 Have a good trip and behave well
 Have a good trip back home
 Say hello, with best wishes
 Goodbye, So long
 Goodbye, walk well
 Like the morning fog
 Walk in peace
 Give my greetings to those who greet
 do not pay attention to the guardians of the royal drum
 Safe travels and long life to you

Example 4

Response:
Yego yego

Yes, Yes

Call:

Nguhoreo nanje mporeho, mugisha May you live long, and I too
we

Ngusagambe nanje ngasambe
Giramata ngo gir'ayandi
Gir'ubumwe ngo gir'ubundi, nya
guhora
Ngo sagamba nya gusagamba
Ngo gir'amata ngo giayandi
Gir'itunga nanje ngir'irindi
Turinganize nya guhoro
Ntityane ngo tumubuze
Ntityane ngo komamashi
Ngo tukundane tuckybonanye,
mugisha we
Gir'imana nya guhoro
Gir'imana nya guhoro
Gir'amata ngo gir'ayandi
Gir'amata ngo gir'iyindi
Gir'iteka ngo gir'irindi mugisha
we

May you prosper, and I too
 May you have milk and have it in abundance
 May you be in harmony, a complete harmony

 May you live long a long life
 May you prosper in a long prosperity
 May you have milk and have it in abundance
 Let's agree and good wishes for a long life
 Let's not argue so as not to lose this occasion
 Let's not argue, better clap our hands
 Let's love one another now that we can see one
 another and good luck
 May God bless you granting you a long life
 May God bless you granting you a long life
 May you have milk and have it in abundance
 May God bless you with many blessings
 Best wishes for happiness and for everything else,
 and good luck

Example 5

Response:

Eh, shasa

What an elegance!

Call:

N'ako gusenya
N'ako kuvoma
N'ako gutega
Horaho, banzuze, sagamba, gwiza
ramuka
Horaho, banzuze
horaro ramuka
ukwanda, ndamwanka
Abandi bakobwa
barasi gusenya
Waruzi kuvoma
Waruzi gutega
Waruzi kugabura

It is needed to look for wood
 It is needed to draw water
 It is needed to cook
 Long life to you, come rather,
 prosper, increase, arise
 Long life to you, come rather,
 long life to you, arise
 He, who hates you, I hate
 The other girls know how to look
 for wood to burn
 Did you know how to draw water?
 Did you know how to cook?
 Did you know how to share?

Notes

¹ The research was conducted in the context of the Italian ethnological mission in equatorial Africa (University of Turin – Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The civil war in Rwanda and the contemporary political situation in Burundi have, until now, prevented me from going back. I would like to thank and to remember everyone who have helped me during my research, beginning with the person in charge of the Centre de civilisation burundaise, Bonaventure Mageza, and his collaborators.

² In particular Arom 1985.

³ See Nattiez 1989 and the bibliography.

⁴ Dal punto di vista testuale i saluti sono il necessario prodromo alla conversazione che seguirà (...) anche se non c'è nessuna coesione semantica tra i saluti e la conversazione. Anzi il contenuto semantico dei saluti è quasi inesistente; il loro scopo non è quello di portare una nuova informazione semantica, bensì quello pragmatico di iniziare un'interazione. Ma accanto a questa funzione testuale i saluti hanno un'importante funzione sociolinguistica di dichiaratori del ruolo e *status* reciproco dei partecipanti all'interazione, oltre a quella generale di regolatore catartico delle relazioni sociali. Come genere, il saluto prevede sempre un salutante e un salutato, ugualmente attivi nello scambio verbale; il grado di complessità può variare da un minimo (A: «'giorno», B: «'giorno »; A : «Hello !», B : «Hello !») a un massimo con numerose repliche (Cardona 1976, p. 205).

⁵ Transcription and translation by Paoline Rutairwa. The greeting was recorded by the author nearby Bukoba (Tanzania) in February 1995, during fieldwork in the context of the Italian ethnology mission in equatorial Africa.

⁶ Direct testimony. This episode too goes back to February 1995.

⁷ Socially speaking, the distinction between equal and unequal is rather accentuated in Burundi's greetings. For the social articulation in Rundi greetings please see, aside from the already cited Van der Burgt, 1903, Bikorihoma 1989.

⁸ Many songs like those of the *ibicuba* herdsman, those of genres included of the repertory if the *inanga* zither, and some *amazina* rhetorical expressions are dedicated to cows.

⁹ See, for example, the lecture notes on Rundi language and literature given by Prof. Adrien Ntabona in the academic year 1991-92, at the University of Burundi at Bujumbura.

¹⁰ In the same interlacustrine area it was possible to record some bride's laments between the Nande of the Zaire and the Haya of Tanzania (Facci 1991).

¹¹ Lyrics translated by Ndimurwanko (1985:105-6).

¹² In contrast to what occurs in other cultures of the region, Rundi women are not completely excluded from playing musical instruments, with the exception of the drum that, in Burundi, has a strong symbolic role in the celebration of political power, and it is reserved to particular clans of musicians. Obviously, the percentage of female instrumentalists is far below that of male instrumentalists, and the chance of women playing the *inanga* zither or other instruments, is rather exceptional. But women, and girls in particular, are also holders of a vast repertoire of singing for *imvyno* dances, which are performed for festive occasions, as in marriages, or to simply entertain. These songs, accompanied by hand clapping and characterized by the antiphonal alternation of a soloist and a choral refrain (a style also common to ritual singing connected to *kubandwa*, the traditional religion), are performed with a full voice in a public and collective dimension which sketches a feminine style considerably more "extroverted" and almost the opposite of the intimate present in genres associated with daily life.

¹³ This can happen without that anyone listening to them, but also in the presence of an occasional audience. Ndimurwanko (1985-6) states that during his inquiry there was always curious people present. They followed with interest and participated emotionally (laughter, sighs and so on), turning the *akazehe* into a sort of performance, and reinforcing its artistic dimension. According to his testimony, two female performers of Bujumbura had become famous to the point of been pointed out in the street as true stars; a sign of the aesthetic valorization of *akazehe*.

¹⁴ Oral testimonies collected during fieldwork.

¹⁵ Transcription and translation of the texts [into Italian?] by Fabien Myukiye.

¹⁶ A study on the correspondence between the quantity of syllables and the musical rhythm has been conducted by Habarugira (1991) concerning wedding and religious Rundi songs.

¹⁷ According to Ndimurwanko (1985-6), the synonyms of *akazehe* designate regional variants of sung greetings.

¹⁸ By Fabien Mvukiye. The transcription of the texts presented a number of problems, as the perception and the comprehension of the words was made difficult by the polytextuality of singing, the subdued vocality and, often, by the unclear pronunciation. For this reason, the transcription of the texts of the *akazehe*, examples 2 and 3, is incomplete in some parts. The text of example 6 was not transcribed because of the complete unrecognizability of the text.

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