

## **ALEXIS KAGAME**

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### **Introduction**

Alexis Kagame (b. 1912–d. 1981) was a Rwandan philosopher, theologian, linguist, historian, poet, translator, and Catholic priest. He belonged to a long lineage of historians affiliated to the pre-colonial Rwandan royal court. After attending a missionary school, he studied at the Nyakibanda Regional Seminary and was ordained a priest on 25 July 1941 at the age of twenty-nine. In this capacity, he became the editor of a Rwandan Catholic newspaper, *Kinyamateka*, in which he published his first literary essays. His publications of the late 1940s were deemed too political to the colonial authorities, who pressurized the diocese to repost him in Rome. While there, he studied at the Pontifical Gregorian University and took his doctoral degree in philosophy. The publication of his thesis arguably made him one of the first sub-Saharan Africans to professionally publish a book in the field of modern philosophy. Just before leaving Rome, Kagame joined Les Prêtres Noirs, a group of African priests who employed Christianity as a basis for African nationalist aspirations. After returning to Rwanda in 1958, he became professor of philosophy, Kinyarwanda, and history at various Rwandan Catholic seminaries. In 1967, he became professor of history at the newly formed National University of Rwanda. He also held a post of visiting professor at the National University of Zaïre (Lubumbashi). Throughout this time, Kagame was often at odds with the European clergy (for works that were deemed not Catholic enough) and with the newly formed Rwandan republic (for works that did not specifically adhere to the government's ideologies). Kagame died in 1981 after being honored with the title of prelate by Pope John Paul II. Overall, Kagame is the author of dozens of books and numerous articles published in French, another twelve books written in Kinyarwanda, either transcriptions of oral literature or works of poetry, including a biblical epic of more than 35,000 verses in the style of Rwanda's pastoral poetry. His work of poetry is often tinged with a subtle dry humor. His works have proved to be widely influential both in African philosophy and across various disciplines within the wider humanities and social sciences, including African theology, Rwandan history, poetry of the Great Lakes Region, and ethnographic studies. Interest in Kagame's thought continues to grow and expand forty years after his death, especially in the field of African oral literature and poetry.

### **General Overview**

The written accomplishments of Alexis Kagame and the secondary literature that ensued are vast. Material cited is limited to works either accessible online or through international, national, or academic libraries. A vast portion of Kagame's oeuvre does not yet figure here because it remains unpublished, untranslated, or unarchived. The article is divided into \*Primary Texts\* and \*Secondary Texts\*. A priority is given here to major texts, thus excluding earlier versions published in small journals and periodicals. Because Kagame wrote mainly in French and Kinyarwanda, the majority of his scholarship is in these languages.

### **Primary Texts**

Primary texts by Kagame are divided into different decades (e.g., \*Works of the 1940s\*, Works of the 1950s\*, \*Works of the 1960s\*, \*Works of the 1970s\*, \*Posthumously Published Work\*). These divisions reflect something of the differentiated development of his literary, philosophical, historical, and ethnographic endeavors. The works of the 1940s take the form of literary

criticism. The 1950s mark a transition toward a much more scholarly and specifically philosophical and historical thinking that will characterize the later, more mature phase of his thought. This decade saw the publication of his major texts in history and philosophy, which have sealed his reputation as one of the most significant African thinkers of his generation. After his country's independence, Kagame's mature work further explores and develops all his major concerns while maintaining a strong preoccupation with linguistics and the question of Christianity.

### Works of the 1940s

Kagame's early work, such as, for example, Kagame 1947b, mainly consists of translations and contextual commentaries on official pastoral, dynastic, and war poetry written by poets affiliated to the Rwandan royal court roughly from the end of the 17th century to the time of writing. Detailed historical accounts of precolonial Rwanda, mostly focusing on the political influence of the sovereignty of Rwanda in relation to the colonial powers, can be found in Kagame 1945a, Kagame 1945b, and Kagame 1947a. These essays and translations are mostly published in either small Christian periodicals or Belgian and Congolese journals. Only four examples of this early work are given here:

Kagame, Alexis. "Ceux qui ont fait le Rwanda." *La Voix du Congolais* 5 (1945a): 157–166.

Published in what will be considered one of the first postwar colonial journals of the region to speak on behalf of "indigenous" populations, this essay establishes Kagame as a leading thinker of African emancipation. This essay explores the kings of Rwanda from the 11th century with a particular emphasis on the way their deeds are celebrated in oral chronicles.

Kagame attributes an average of thirty years per reign and the invariability of sons succeeding their fathers. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1611646>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "\*Le Rwanda et son Roi[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25837706>]\*." *Aequatoria* 8.2 (1945b): 41–58.

A key essay in Kagame's early work, one that had vast political consequences in Rwanda.

Published to influence the colonial authorities to return the administration of sacred herds to the court, this essay emphasizes the importance of sovereigns to the good governance of the country. It focuses on the history, role, and influence of the Rwandan king on his subjects and emphasizes the importance of both education and Christianization.

Kagame, Alexis. "Le Code ésotérique de la dynastie du Rwanda." *Zaire* 1.4 (1947a): 363–386.

Kagame's first major work of history and politics is often considered the starting point of his endeavors to defend dynastic and clannish lineages and their literary productions. The Rwandan court code was inaccessible to anyone not affiliated to the court, except for Kagame, who, as a member of a lineage that had long served as the official historians, was tasked to provide a general explanation for them, included here in its first formulation. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/173346522>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "\*La Voix de l'Afrique: Un poème du Rwanda[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1156938>]\*." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 12.1 (1947b): 41–46. [<https://doi.org/10.2307/1156938>]

This essay focuses on a poem of 365 verses by Nyakayonga, dated 1820. It is presented in both Kinyarwanda and French. The focus is on the importance of dynastic poetry, the respect of traditions, and the richness of Rwandan poetry.

## Works of the 1950s

In the 1950s, Kagame continued his research into traditional oral poetry and developed his own poetry. Kagame 1951, Kagame 1956b, and Kagame 1956c all focus on oral traditions, while Kagame 1952a and Kagame 1955 focus on his own poetic endeavors. With the publications of Kagame 1952b, Kagame 1954, and Kagame 1958a, he also expanded his range of interests to take on the political and racial history and structure of Rwandan society. This body of work is now mostly perceived as an ideological projection of Rwanda, propping up the court's political, historical, and ethnic claims rather than describing actual historical realities. Nonetheless, it constitutes one of the first attempts by an African scholar to write down a history of Rwanda alongside Western historical findings. This period also saw the culmination of his scholarly achievements with his much discussed published doctoral thesis on the Bantu-Rwandan philosophy of being (Kagame 1956a). By focusing specifically on Kinyarwanda, Kagame's book has the extraordinary merit of challenging commonplace Western assumptions about the meaning of the word "being," while also offering a unique insight into how a particular language articulates both subjectivity and intersubjectivity. While his philosophical work received great critical acclaim during this period, his ethnographic and missionary views have been progressively disputed, remaining, nonetheless, essential testimonies of the impact of European ideologies amidst clerical intellectuals of the Great Lakes Region. The period also saw the publication of Kagame 1950, an essay on the first arrival of European colonizers in Rwanda; of Kagame 1953, a uniquely personal account of the author's own encounter with colonial powers; and, finally, of Kagame 1958b, an extraordinary speculative philosophical study in comparative religion.

Kagame, Alexis. "Premier contacts du Ruanda et de l'Occident" followed by "Un apôtre du Ruanda tombé dans l'oubli." *Grands Lacs: Revue Mensuelle des Missionnaires d'Afrique* 66.1 (1950): 7–19.

See also "Un apôtre du Ruanda tombé dans l'oubli," *Grand Lacs: Revue Mensuelle des Missionnaires d'Afrique* 66.1 (1950): 24–26. This essay is published in a special issue celebrating fifty years since the arrival of missionaries in Rwanda. It even includes a letter from Rwanda's then king, Mutara III, congratulating the White Fathers for their work.

Kagame's essay is a series of historical anecdotes about the arrival of Europeans in Rwanda since 1250 CE. The issue also contains Kagame's essay on the murder of a Ugandan chief (Tobi) who was an early convert to Christianity. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/613302464>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. \**La Poésie dynastique au*

*Rwanda*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_67](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_67)]\*. Section des sciences morales et politiques 22.1. Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1951.

This book is a collection of over 176 dynastic poems written by Rwandan poets. It brings together a historical account of Rwanda's poetry, translations into French, and a lists of all the poems in chronological order. This book is an invaluable source of information not only on precolonial Rwanda, but also on the role of poets both as interpreters of tradition and as intermediaries between the king and his subjects. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/491552418>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *La Divine pastorale—Traduction française, par l'auteur, de la première veillée d'une épopée écrite en langue ruandaise*. Brussels: Éditions du Marais, 1952a.

This is the first of eighteen poetic books (or "eventides") written by Kagame in verse in Kinyarwanda and the only two translated into French by the author. The second book is

Kagame 1955. *La Divine pastorale* inscribes itself as Kagame's most sustained poetic attempt to Christianize his fellow Rwandese while encouraging them to extricate themselves from all forms of Europeanization. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/5756702>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. \**Le code des institutions politiques du Rwanda précolonial*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_77](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_77)]\*. Sections des sciences morales et politiques 26.1. Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1952b.

A detailed account of the political institutions of precolonial Rwanda. The book describes aspects of Rwandan politics (hierarchical societies, absolute monarchy) and offers a lengthy analysis of army structure and court rituals in times of both peace and conflict. Its aim is to establish a sense of perspective, trying to compare precolonial Rwanda to medieval Europe. Although often disproved, Kagame's book still stands as one of the first accounts of Rwandan political organizations prior to the arrival of colonizers. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/2750320>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "Mes premiers contacts avec la civilisation occidentale." *Bulletin de l'Institut Royal Colonial Belge* 24.3 (1953): 851–862.

A fascinating first person account of Kagame's own encounter with Western civilization. It not only exposes his views on European society and culture, but it also narrates parts of his own childhood, his time at the seminaries, his engagement with literary and poetic criticism, his realization of the importance of Rwandan culture, and his views on the way Western concepts and ideas infiltrates the minds of Rwandese. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1103441769>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. \**Les Organisations socio-familiales de l'ancien Rwanda*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_111](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_111)]\* Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1954.

This first account of racial and social divisions in Rwanda written by a Rwandese. It explores the three races and fifteen clans as well as the various steps in a Rwandese life prior to colonization. It also surveys peculiarities of precolonial Rwandan society. As is well known, Kagame adheres to problematic ethnographic and missionary accounts favored at the time, which have since been largely questioned and revised.

Kagame, Alexis. *La naissance de l'univers: Deuxième veillée de "La divine pastorale."* Brussels: Éditions du Marais, 1955.

This is the second instalment of Kagame's monumental attempt to Christianize his fellow Rwandese through poetry. Sixteen other installments are still waiting translation. This second volume complements the first in the way it lays out the basis of Kagame's faith and the power of Christian redemption. Illustrations by Antoine de Vinck. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/5651268>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. \**La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_155](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_155)]\*. Brussels: Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1956a.

Kagame's masterpiece outlines the structure of Kinyarwanda and attempts to show how this language formulates a unique understanding of being. Far from being a misapplication of Aristotelian concepts of being, Kagame's book is a pioneering attempt to give a metaphysical resonance to a specific set of linguistic patterns irrespective of Western traditions. Its radical inventiveness (using components of his name—Kama/Gama—as a dialogue format) stands out as a uniquely creative project.

Kagame, Alexis. "La Littérature orale au Rwanda." In *Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent*. By Alexis Kagame, 205–211. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1956b.

Kagame's essay was published in a book that would mark the birth of a properly African Christian theology. Much debated to this day, it contains radical manifestos on the need to adapt the teachings of Christ to an African consciousness. Kagame's essay is an oddity in as much as it evades any theological consideration to simply reflect on the role of orality in Africa and the imperative to encourage reciprocity and avoid inequalities between humans. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/493838041>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "La poésie guerrière[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24345488>]\*." *Présence Africaine* 6.11 (1956c): 119–122.

A short essay on Rwandan war poetry (*lbyiuugo*) and specifically on a 1910 poem by Nyamwasa. Kagame presents and analyzes this poem.

Kagame, Alexis. \**La notion de génération appliquée à la généalogie dynastique et à l'histoire du Rwanda*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_149](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_149)]\*. Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1958a.

This is at once an ethnological, linguistic, and sociocultural analysis of thirty rulers from Gihanga in the 10th century all the way to 1958 based on oral (dynastic and war poetries) and "vital" tradition (i.e., clannish genealogies). It establishes specific periods in Rwandan history either through changes of residence of the royal family or through periodic eclipses. Kagame defends the idea that the Tutsi families reigned over Rwanda long before the estimates of European ethnologists.

Kagame, Alexis. "Le sacré païen, le sacré chrétien." *Recherches et Débats du Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français* 24 (1958b): 126–145.

This long essay was published after the first colloquium of black intellectuals organized by the Sorbonne in 1957. The aim was to address the public's false perception that African intellectuals can reference only folklore and not a systematic body of thought. With that aim in mind, Kagame writes this wonderfully speculative piece in comparative religion showing that the sacred in sub-Saharan Africa is as worthy of study as that put forward by Christianity. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/878270679>]\*.

### Works of the 1960s

Kagame's work of the 1960s is mainly preoccupied with linguistic, ethnographic, sociohistorical, and poetic considerations. Avoiding philosophical speculation, Kagame 1961 and Kagame 1963b present a detailed account of precolonial Rwanda, focusing specifically on Rwandan herd and social armies. Because of his close relation to the court, his clannish affiliation, his position as key player in the country's clerical elite, and based on the arguments put forward in his many essays, Kagame is usually perceived as having defended the superiority of the Tutsis. This perception has received not only many criticisms, especially in the aftermath of the genocide of 1994, but also some new reinterpretations that tend to disprove this commonplace perception of Kagame's ethnic analyses. These recent scholarly endeavors, which unfortunately cannot be included here for they do not directly address Kagame's oeuvre specifically and tend to bring some ambiguity to his supposedly implacable hierarchy. If a substantial and impartial study of the posthumous impact of Kagame's work on the tragedy of 1994 comes along, this article will be amended so as to reflect this new perspective on his oeuvre. While this work is still to come, it is worth noting that in this conflicted period, Kagame still manages to address other concerns. In this way, Kagame 1960 explains affix-based languages to foreigners, providing a scrupulous

analysis of the linguistic structures of both Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. Kagame 1969 continues his exploration of pastoral, dynastic, and war poetry. Three more texts further expose the diversity of Kagame's writing during that time. Kagame 1963 narrates in journalistic fashion his three months trip to the United States; Kagame 1967 presents an analysis of the various cults dedicated to the dead; and Kagame 1968 summarizes his sweeping ethnographic and linguistic investigations of the word "God" across the southern part of Africa. The 1960s was also a period fraught with tensions with the clergy. This is particularly evident in Kagame 1963a.

Kagame, Alexis. *La langue du Rwanda et du Burundi expliquée aux autochtones*. Kabgayi, Ruanda-Urundi: Vicariat Apostolique, 1960.

Kagame's comprehensive presentation of the linguistic structure of both Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. It contains lengthy analyses of these countries' affix-based rheomodic languages, their origins, grammar-structure, as well as comparisons with European languages. As a precursor to the widely discussed Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*), this focused book argues that to think in a particular language (Kinyarwanda, Kirundi) informs the way the world is articulated. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/60660652>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *L'histoire des armées-bovines dans l'ancien Rwanda*. Brussels: Academie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1961.

This is Kagame's most detailed account of Rwanda's famed herd armies. It traces their history back to the 12th century giving a precise account of their owners, origin, and names from Mibambwe II to Kigeli IV. The book makes a case that these herd armies were not all destined to fight enemies, but they were more akin to corporate and generational groupings of cow owners with their respective duties to the king. \*Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences[[http://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_190](http://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_190)]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *Le colonialisme face à la doctrine missionnaire à l'heure de Vatican II*. Butare, Rwanda: Self-Published Manuscript, 1963a.

Composed in the middle of the Vatican II Council and dedicated to exploring the relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world, Kagame expresses, in this long essay, a strong condemnation of the way missionary life allies itself with the negative forces of colonialism in Rwanda. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/871733245>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "Impressions d'un Noir de l'Afrique centrale sur les Etats-Unis d'Amérique[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/bulletin\\_1963](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/bulletin_1963)]\*." *Bulletin des Scéances de l'Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer* 3 (1963b): 474–497.

This essay offers a unique insight into Kagame's personal journey to the United States between October and December 1961. It highlights his impressions (the immensity of the country, its institutions, its economy), experiences (airports, hotels, car rentals), opinions (on American universities), encounters (Amish), and, most importantly, the generalization of racial and racist segregation and violence across the country. Of note is also Kagame's surprise at the lack of interest from African Americans for all things African.

Kagame, Alexis. \**Les milices du Rwanda précolonial*[[https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir\\_149](https://www.kaowarsom.be/en/memoir_149)]\*. Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1963c.

As a complement to Kagame 1961, Kagame publishes his account of the eighty-eight hereditary Rwandan militias (or social armies) that dominated the country at various points in history since the middle ages. It is the culmination of a patient work of research started twenty-two years earlier (in 1941) into court archives, folklores, and legends as well as previous social

and cultural analyses of these militias from Nsoro I in the 14th century to Mutara III (r. 1931–1959).

Kagame, Alexis. “Description du culte rendu aux trépassés du Rwanda.” *Bulletin des Scéances de l’Académie Royale des Sciences d’Outre-Mer* 4 (1967): 746–779.

In this long essay, Kagame undertakes a historical, anthropological, and linguistic investigation into the way the departed (*abâzimu*) are perceived in Rwanda. It provides an analysis of rituals of mourning, including the practice of sacrifices as well as burial and purification rites. The essay is divided in two parts: general rituals around the departed followed by specific rituals of the *Immandwa* sect (lineage obligations, initiation ceremonies, processions, etc.). See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/772676111>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. “La place de Dieu et de l’homme dans la religion des Bantu.” *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* 2.4 (1968): 213–222.

This essay condenses the research on the name “God” in both Kagame 1956 (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*) and Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*), providing a sweeping analysis of it across ten different languages (from Cameroon to Tanzania). In doing so, Kagame manages to extricate the Bantu conception of God as radically other, preexisting, eternal, and embodying pure necessity and potentiality. Although Kagame infuses this interpretation with his own Christian beliefs, it remains nonetheless a key text for anyone interested in the African names of God. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/772668001>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *Introduction aux grands genres lyriques de l’ancien Rwanda*. Butare: Éditions Universitaires du Rwanda, 1969.

This substantial book explores the pastoral, dynastic, and war poetry elaborated orally at the royal court of Rwanda from the 17th century to the 1950s. In minute detail, Kagame provides an insider’s take on these complex epic poems both in the way they sing the praise of warriors and in the way they present a web of myths and histories that constitute the foundations of Rwandan precolonial poetry. The poems are published in both Kinyarwanda and French. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/6154119>]\*.

### Works of the 1970s

The mature work of Alexis Kagame consists of hefty volumes on the ethnic history of Rwanda, precise investigations into oral traditions and myths, as well as wide-ranging philosophical analyses of linguistic patterns across half of the African continent. Concerning ethnic history, Kagame 1971, Kagame 1972, and Kagame 1975a further expose his now much-disputed views of Rwandan ethnic history. Kagame 1979 provides one of the first explorations of the well-known Rwandan myth of Lyangombe. Kagame’s philosophical endeavors reach their peak with the much-discussed Kagame 1976, which is often seen as a continuation of his PhD dissertation turned book, *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l’être* (Kagame 1956a [cited under \*Works of the 1950s]). The period also sees, with Kagame 1975b, one of the most detailed account of his understanding of space-time in a Rwandan context. Finally, the Rwandese philosopher and historian also published (Kagame 1978) an unusual ethnographic presentation of his own poetry. This productive period is nonetheless also characterized by several difficult situations. First, it is marked by political upheavals not only in Rwanda, but also across numerous other countries in southern Africa. These events force Kagame to assume difficult positions in increasingly tense and volatile environments. Second, it is also characterized by the first sustained critiques of his work outside of the small confines of the first generation of African clerical intellectuals. This

critique mainly focuses on Kagame's indebtedness to Placide Tempels's earlier work and his outright adherence to what Kwame Nkrumah, Marcien Towa, and Paulin Hountondji have pejoratively called "ethno-philosophy." These criticisms force Kagame to adopt defensive positions, not in order to legitimize his ethno-philosophical work, but to insist on the importance of a philosophy based on the study of languages. Notwithstanding these difficult situations, Kagame manages to produce a series of key works in the fields of both ethnography and philosophy.

Kagame, Alexis. "L'ethno-philosophie des Bantu." In *La Philosophie contemporaine: Chroniques*. Edited by Raymond Klibansky, 589–612. Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice 1971. Often seen as a response to Paulin Hountondji's blistering critique of ethno-philosophy (Hountondji 1996 [cited under \*Critical Studies in Kagame: Critique of Ethno-philosophy\*]), this text, in fact, foreshadows the work included in *La Philosophie Bantu comparée* (Kagame 1976), published five years later. Kagame's essay constitutes a transition between the work started with Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*) and the linguistic research of the late 1960s. It is published in a well-known series of volumes dedicated to world philosophies. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/614776622>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *Un abrégé de l'ethno-histoire du Rwanda*. Vol. 1. Butare: Éditions Universitaires du Rwanda, 1972.

The first of Kagame's controversial two-volume ethnohistory of Rwanda covers the period between the arrival of the first Batwas all the way to the demise of the King Mutara II. This history is mostly confined to the reigning clans and families, their feuds and alliances both within Rwanda and with neighboring countries. This book contains an extensive index, detailed maps, and several pages of photographic evidence of the somatic differences between the three ethnic groups. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/901397756>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. *Un abrégé de l'histoire du Rwanda*. Vol. 2, 1853 à 1972. Butare: Éditions Universitaires du Rwanda, 1975a.

This second volume covers the period between the country's twenty-fourth king, Kigeli IV, all the way to 1972. It therefore mostly deals with Rwanda's road to independence and the establishment of its first republic. The foreword is followed by photographs of key army figures in the newly appointed peace and national unity committee set up by President Juvénal Habyarimana. As with the first volume, Kagame 1972, this second volume contains an extensive index, detailed maps, and photos. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/180550305>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. "Aperception empirique du temps et conception de l'histoire dans la pensée bantoue[<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000001985>]\*." In *Les Cultures et le temps: Au carrefour des cultures; Études préparées pour l'UNESCO*, By Alexis Kagame, Paul Ricoeur, Claude Larre, et al., 2–32. Paris: Payot, 1975b. [ISBN: 9782228115209]

Kagame's masterly long essay widens the scope of Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*) by attempting to articulate the way class-based languages from Senegal to South Sudan and from the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (CAF) to South Africa construct their own understanding of time and history. It covers key terms in philosophy such as duration, eternity, infinity, destiny, being, existence, existent, as well as the various ways of dividing time both empirically and linguistically.

Kagame, Alexis. *La Philosophie Bantu comparée*. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1976. [ISBN: 9782708703315]

Kagame's second major work in philosophy expands the research started in Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*) by taking on most sub-Saharan African regions using affix-based languages. The result is a pioneering attempt to give a philosophical resonance to linguistic patterns found across one-hundred and eighty languages and dialects. This is the culmination of seventeen years of research, empirically collected evidence, and of over four hundred books and articles methodically researched, indexed, and analyzed. It is complemented with six color maps. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/3203140>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis. “\*Une oeuvre ‘ethnologique’ en langue rwandaise[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40341612>]\*.” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 24 (1978): 191–202.

This is probably the most unusual of Kagame's published work because it is a scholarly presentation of extracts of a poem penned by the author, but included anonymously. The poem, written between 1941 and 1966, is a revised account of the history of Christianity partly inspired by Rwandan court hymns. Of 35,732 verses, only a few extracts are presented here, others can also be found in Kagame 1952a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*).

Kagame, Alexis. “Lumières nouvelles sur le culte de Lyangombe & l'historicité de Lyangombe, chef des ‘Immandwa.’” *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* 10 (1979): 1–30.

Kagame interprets in this essay one of the most familiar myths of Rwanda. This long text explores the story of Lyangombe, a mythical 16th-century itinerant hunter-spirit who carries out Imana's orders and, on dying, institutes both cult and taboos among the ruling clans of Rwanda, all the while promising the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa that, if they pay him homage, they will have the prosperity denied to them by ancestral spirits and ineffectual rites. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/772531410>]\*.

### Posthumously Published Work

Alexis Kagame died while traveling to Nairobi in 1981 at the age of sixty-nine. His posthumous publication records are sparse in as much as the bulk of his unpublished work still remains to be made available to a wider audience in and beyond Rwanda. While waiting for this work to be published, it is worth mentioning here four important publications: Kagame 1981 is a rare interview with an ethnologist about poetry. Kagame 1984 provides a glimpse into the way the Rwandese philosopher reacted to the critiques of ethno-philosophy. In all magnanimity, Kagame responds by simply highlighting all the problems encountered by ethno-philosophers. Kagame and Hulstaert 1995 probably constitutes the most insightful view into the author's struggles with religious powers. Finally, Kagame 2004 reintroduces his poetry to a much wider audience.

Kagame, Alexis. “\*Collecte et étude des traditions orales (entretien de Pierre Smith avec Alexis Kagame)[[https://rpcafrique.free.fr/51\\_entretiens\\_Kagame.pdf](https://rpcafrique.free.fr/51_entretiens_Kagame.pdf)]\*.” *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture* 9.51 (1981): 48–55.

The French ethnologist Pierre Smith interviews Kagame on transcription, translation, and interpretation of Rwandan oral literature (pastoral, dynastic, war). It provides a unique insight into his personal relationship to this tradition and his endeavors to disseminate it. It contains extracts of poetry and a few other commentaries on work in progress at the time.

Kagame, Alexis. “\*L’histoire et le phénomène de la colonisation [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000058865]\*.” In *Histoire et diversité des cultures*. Edited by UNESCO, 297–308. Paris: UNESCO, 1984. [ISBN: 9789232020659]

This long essay, originally given as a paper at a UNESCO conference in Senegal in 1978 on the theme of the function of history with regards to the diversity of cultures, explores the

importance of intermingling linguistic cultures while respecting the difference, autonomy, and integrity of sovereign nations, their cultures, and their heritages. The essay treats the criticisms that were addressed in response to Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*).

Kagame, Alexis. *Indyohesha-birayi ou Le relève-goût des pommes de terre*. Paris: Association Classiques Africaines, 2004. [ISBN: 9782912839268]

Kagame's humoristic take on the pig, the domestic animal adopted by Rwandese since the arrival of Europeans, is a masterpiece of Rwandan poetry. By using the same kind of praise lavished by Rwandan pastoral poets onto cows, Kagame indirectly denounces the taboos about food that were rife in the Rwandan court in the 1940s. This exceptionally erudite book about the "Flavor-Enhancer of Potatoes" contains extensive annotation and a lengthy introduction by the US-based Rwandan scholar Anthère Nzabatsinda. Introduced and edited by Anthère Nzabatsinda. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/59725221>]\*.

Kagame, Alexis, and Gustaaf Hulstaert. "'Correspondance, 1944–1976: Un débat sur les civilisations blanche et noire[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25837223>]\*.'" *Annales Aequatoria* 16 (1995): 467–588.

This lengthy article is made up of over sixty letters written over twenty years between Kagame and Gustaaf Hulstaert, a Belgian missionary and editor of the journal *Aequatoria*. These letters are key to understand Kagame's nationalistic and Africanist positions, his uncomfortable relationship with the colonial authorities, and, most importantly, his frustrations at the ecclesiastical censorship he experienced when voicing his opinions. It also contains fascinating insights into Kagame's daily life in Butare.

## **Secondary Texts**

The secondary sources are divided in two. First, a short section covering colloquia and bibliographies since Kagame's death. Second, a much larger section covering most critical studies specifically written on Kagame's work. This second section is subdivided into the general fields of work touched by Kagame during his lifetime. These include: \*Critique of Ethno-philosophy\*, \*Philosophy\*, \*Theology\*, \*Linguistics\*, \*Poetry and Translation\*, and finally, \*Politics, Ethnology, and Sociology\*.

## **General Collections of Essays and Bibliographies**

Soon after Kagame's death, his work was immediately considered of immense importance, not only to Rwandese who sought to reflect on his work and the impact of one of their most erudite compatriots, but also internationally for the way he mapped the work of African clerical intellectuals as the first expression of modern African philosophy, ethnology, history, theology, and literary criticism. Although the two colloquia, Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique 1987 and \*\* Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique 1988 were staged in Rwanda's capital, they drew numerous authors from both the continent and beyond. Nsengimana 1987 offers the first bibliographic reference.

Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique. *Sagesse et vie quotidienne en Afrique: Actes du Symposium international de philosophie, Kigali (31 juillet–7 aout 1983)*. Kigali, Rwanda: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1987. [class:conference-proceeding]

This collection contains a few important essays by some of the most prominent figures working in Rwanda at the time. They were given as papers on the final day of a conference on wisdom and daily life in Africa. It was mostly perceived as an homage to Kagame who had died two

years earlier. The essays examine the contemporaneity of Kagame's thinking and address its core concerns of language, ethics, and religion. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/19723921>]\*.

Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique. *Alexis Kagame: L'homme et son oeuvre; Actes du Colloque international de philosophie, Kigali (26 novembre–2 décembre 1987)*. Kigali, Rwanda: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988. [class:conference-proceeding]

A major collection of essays on Kagame's work. Published by the Rwandan Ministry of Education as part of the series "Uburezi, ubuhanga n'umuco: Education, science et culture," this 300-page book brings together key essays by priests, novelists, politicians, philosophers, and historians. The essay by Balibutsa is probably the most astute analysis of Kagame's philosophical corpus to date. As a bonus, the book contains extensive bibliographic references up to 1987. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/609774746>]\*.

Nsengimana, Joseph. *Alexis Kagame, l'homme, la bibliographie thématique et l'esquisse d'analyse de l'œuvre littéraire*. Ruhengeri: Éditions Universitaires du Rwanda, 1987.

Besides a hard-to-find earlier bibliography compiled by Father Gilles-Marius Dion in 1968, this bibliography contains a short introduction to Kagame's life and work, as well as an early overview of Kagame's bibliography up to 1986 in both French and Kinyarwanda. It draws a particular emphasis on literary criticism. It was written by a scholar who would later serve in Paul Kagame's post-genocidal government in holding an ambassadorial post at the United Nations. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/25009433>]\*.

### Critical Studies on Kagame

Critical responses to Kagame's work are divided into subsections \*Critiques of Ethno-philosophy\*, \*Philosophy\*, \*Theology\*, \*Linguistics\*, \*Poetry and Translation\*, and \*Politics, Ethnology, and Sociology\*. These broadly reflect the diversity and range of critical engagements with his thought, both in and out of Africa. The first section, treating arguably the most well-known topic, addresses the sometimes virulent critiques that were addressed to Kagame after the publication of his 1956 book, *La Philosophie Bantu-Rwandaise de l'être* (Kagame 1956a [cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*]). The following sections present other aspects of Kagame's work that might not have received as much attention, but they are key to understanding the full range of topics and themes he explored in his lifetime.

#### Critique of Ethno-philosophy

The critique of ethno-philosophy was arguably started by Paulin Hountondji in an article written for UNESCO in 1969 and subsequently published in *Diogenes* in 1970 under the title "Remarques sur la philosophie Africaine contemporaine." This was then revised and published alongside other essays six years later in French and in 1983 in an English translation (Hountondji 1996). Kagame's position has always been that philosophy needs to draw not so much from local folklore, proverbs, legends, and ethnographic findings, but, most importantly, from the language that voices it. As an eminent linguist, Kagame sought to give voice to the way a particular language articulates its existential, historical, and sociocultural parameters irrespective of the long tradition of Western philosophy. Notwithstanding his specific position, which can be found in his numerous publications, many African scholars felt obliged to take sides for or against the so-called ethno-philosophers. Well-known scholars, in their works Boulaga 1977, Elungu 1984,

and Obanda 2002, have all sided with Hountondji with differing aims and methods. Balibutsa 1988 offers a sober reassessment of the issues at stake in this debate.

Balibutsa, Maniragaba. "Alexis Kagame et le débat philosophique." In *Alexis Kagame: L'homme et son oeuvre; Actes du Colloque international de philosophie, Kigali (26 novembre-2 décembre 1987)*. Edited by Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 149–166. Kigali: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 1988.

The Gabon-based Rwandan philosopher Maniragaba Balibusta offers in this essay a clear-sighted evaluation of the criticisms that were addressed to Kagame about his ethno-philosophy. Balibutsa provides a strong defense of the kind of philosophy that respects the language that enunciates it. The essay also contains a new reassessment of specific Rwandan proverbs as well as a reinvigorated interpretation of Kagame's ontology. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/609774746>]\*.

Eboussi Boulaga[non-invertible], Fabien. *Muntu in Crisis: African Authenticity and Philosophy*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2014. [ISBN: 9781592219889]

The Cameroonian philosopher Eboussi Boulaga offers in this book published in French in 1977 a new way of thinking about Africa that frees itself from both the misguided nostalgia of a mythical past and the humiliation of endlessly responding to former colonial powers. In his critique of ethno-philosophy, he targets Kagame for being a naïve reader of local folklore. He then gives a new sense to Muntu, that is, not just Africans specifically, but, as its etymology suggests, humanity overall. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/890080218>]\*.

Elungu P. E. A. *L'éveil philosophique africain*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1984.

In the same vein as Hountondji 1996, the Congolese (DRC) philosopher Elungu contends that Kagame is basically incapable of truly uncovering the nature of Rwandan thought. The only thing Kagame can do is to simply transpose the supposedly eternal truths of Aristotle's work over mismatched bits of information taken from Rwandan society and history all in the hope of laying the foundations of a genuinely Rwandan philosophy. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/420738860>]\*.

Hountondji, Paulin. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. [ISBN: 9780253332295]

The Beninese philosopher's well-known book contains a blistering attack on Kagame. Hountondji refutes the idea that there is an indigenous, collective African philosophy separate and distinct from Western philosophical traditions and contends that ethno-philosophers are simply proto-nationalists reacting against colonialism, but writing paradoxically in the terms of colonialist discourse. Hountondji argues that a genuine African philosophy must assimilate and transcend the heritage of Western philosophy and reflect a rigorous process of independent scientific inquiry. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/255052865>]\*.

Obanda, Simon. *Re-création de la philosophie africaine: Rupture avec Tempels et Kagame*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002. [ISBN: 9783906768595]

Obanda's book contains yet another blistering critique of ethno-philosophy and of Kagame in particular. The Congolese (DRC) philosopher and diplomat accuses Kagame of understanding language arbitrarily and to project Western-centric colonial mis-readings of Africa. Not unlike the reading of Kagame in Hountondji 1996, Obanda's book is nonetheless an invitation to continue a philosophical reflection that refuses to give in to purist views of both Africa and philosophy. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/52746568>]\*.

## Philosophy

In contrast to the blunt critique of ethno-philosophy, some philosophers, in works such as Crahay 1965, have attempted to reflect instead on the potential of Kagame's interpretation of the linguistic and cultural specificities of his inter-lacustrine region. A chief focus is whether Kagame's Aristotelian categories are valid within an African context. These are broadly studied in Bassey and Mendie 2019, Tshiamalenga Ntumba 1975, Okolo 1986, and Udoka Ukwamedua 2011. Another main focus is the importance of using one's own language to do philosophy. These all seem to revolve around the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu's argument that African philosophy can truly take off only if it acknowledges its linguistic specificities. Bachir Diagne 2000, Balibutsa 1985, and Ramose 2006 all take this direction in their own readings of Kagame. Finally, Ba 2007 offers a unique interpretation of the end goal of Kagame's philosophy. Ba, Cheikh Moctar. "La problématique de la fin ultime dans l'éthique bantu-rwandaise." *Revue Africaine* 2 (May 2007): 9–15.

A careful analysis of Kagame's understanding of the trajectory of being within a Bantu-Rwandese context. According to Ba, a Senegalese scholar specializing in comparative philosophies, Kagame suggests the notion of procreation as the ultimate aim of life on earth. The essay carefully follows the arguments in Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*) albeit from a specific perspective, namely, that of the end of existence as developed by Thomas Aquinas. \*L'Harmattan[<http://liseuse.harmattan.fr/978-2-296-03692-5>]\* See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/848158967>]\*.

Bachir Diagne[non-invertible], Souleymane. "'\*Revisiter 'La Philosophie Bantoue': L'idée d'une grammaire philosophique[<https://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/077044.pdf>]\*.'" *Politique Africaine* 77 (March 2000): 44–53.

The well-known Senegalese philosopher Bachir Diagne emphasizes the duty not to criticize ethno-philosophy. He asks that we should take up again seriously what was at stake with this focus on linguistic and literary traditions, but which was lost in the dead end of a philosophy reduced to ethnicity. As such, he follows in the footsteps of the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu, who asks us to "think in one's language," without mediation.

Balibutsa, Maniragaba. *Les perspectives de la pensée philosophique Bantu-Rwandaise après Alexis Kagame*. Butare: Editions Université Nationale du Rwanda, 1985.

Without doubt, one of the most sustained and thorough efforts to address and expand on Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*). After expounding Rwandan cultural legends and proverbs, and after developing precise metaphysical exegeses on Kagame's oeuvre, the Gabon-based Rwandan philosopher then reassesses his elder's work in the light of the a priori as developed by Hume, Kant, and Husserl. This sadly underestimated masterpiece of African philosophy is partly due to Balibutsa's departure from the country following the 1994 genocide. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/901531443>]\*.

Bassey, Samuel Akpan, and John Gabriel Mendie. "Alexis Kagame's Ontological Categories." *Cogito, Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 11.1 (March 2019): 52–68.

This essay, by two leading Nigerian philosophers, consists of a hermeneutic interpretation of Kagame's philosophy. Taking its cue from the work of the well-known Nigerian hermeneutic philosopher Theophilus Okere, it argues that philosophy is an interpretation of cultural symbols, signs, and languages and that, ultimately, African philosophy is an ontologico-existential hermeneutics. \*Cogito[<https://cogito.ucdc.ro/cogitonr.1%2029.03.2019.pdf>]\*.

Crahay, Franz. "Conceptual Take-Off: Conditions for a Bantu philosophy." *Diogenes* 13.52 (Winter 1965): 55–78. [<https://doi.org/10.1177/039219216501305204>]

One of the first comprehensive evaluation of Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*). The Belgian philosopher's classic analysis constitutes a cornerstone in the development of African philosophy in the first stages of decolonization. After contrasting Placide Tempels's and Kagame's work, Crahay sets the agenda for African philosophy for the next decade, stressing the need to enter an age of mature, self-critical, and constructive thought, one that relies not just on ethnographic findings, but also on philosophical conceptualizations without reference to Western thought.

Okolo, Okonda W'Oleko. *Pour une philosophie de la culture et du développement: Recherches d'hermeneutique et de praxis africaines*. Kinshasa: Presses Universitaires du Zaïre, 1986.

The Congolese (DRC) philosopher Okonda W'Oleko Okolo proposes in this small book to reread Kagame again in order to accomplish the kind of take-off that it never achieved. Okolo's reading of Kagame is an attempt to problematize yet again Aristotle's categories and to highlight more precisely those emerging from Kinyarwanda. The outcome of Okolo's reading is to confirm that Kagame indeed put forward a genuine philosophy of language. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/18389437>]\*.

Ramose, Mogobe. "Alexis Kagame on the Bantu Philosophy of Be-ing, Aristotle's *Categoriae*, and *De interpretatione*." In *Re-ethnicizing the Minds?: Cultural Revival in Contemporary Thought*. Edited by Thorsten Botz-Bornstein and Jürgen Hengelbrock, 53–61. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006. [ISBN: 9789042020412]

The South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose offers in this essay a contemporary reappraisal of Kagame's philosophy. Instead of supporting the view that ethno-philosophy has failed in establishing itself as a proper philosophy, Ramose argues that any study of the patterns of languages and any attempt at articulating categories of being offers a renewed perspective on philosophy. To do so, he explores the comparative methodology, the importance of rationality, and the difference between ontology and metaphysics. See

\*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1123867808>]\*.

Tshiamalenga Ntumba[non-invertible], Ignace-Marcel. "La Vision *Ntu* de l'homme: Essai de philosophie linguistique et anthropologique." In *Philosophie Africaine: Textes Choisis*. Vol. 1. Edited by A. J. Smet, 156–180. Kinshasa: Presses Universitaires du Zaïre, 1975.

The Congolese (DRC) philosopher and theologian Tshiamalenga Ntumba offers a reinterpretation of Kagame's use of linguistics within a philosophical context. The essay has the merit of distancing itself from the earlier work of Placide Tempels and foreseeing the dangers of Paulin Hountondji's rejection of ethno-philosophy. Tshiamalenga Ntumba indirectly supports Kagame's attempt to create a purely language-based ontology that is proper to the inter-lacustrine area. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/464579718>]\*.

Udoka Ukwamedua, Nelson. "\*A Critical Review of Alexis Kagame's Four Categories of African Philosophy[<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/og/article/view/71771>]\*." *OGIRISI: Journal of African Studies* 8 (2011): 248–256.

In this essay for the new African journal *Ogirisi*, the Nigerian philosopher Nelson Udoka Ukwamedua provides a new assessment of Kagame's appropriation of Aristotle's four categories of being in Kagame 1956a (cited under \*Works of the 1950s\*). Poorly written, this essay nonetheless invites readers to decolonize African philosophy, thus updating a little the earlier criticisms addressed to ethno-philosophy.

## Theology

Kagame's work in the field of theology is a delicate one in as much as it consists either of doubts expressed about the well-founded purpose of Christian missionary work tied to the process of colonization or of attempts to Christianize Rwandan myths, legends, and cosmologies. Nonetheless, this is a vast area of work that is underresearched because most of his work is still in need of translation and exegesis (these include, for example, lengthy translations and interpretations of evangelical, liturgic, and biblical texts). Mainly written by friars, priests, and fellow abbots, the scholarship has lost a little of its impetus ever since theological studies progressively lost their central place among public intellectual debates in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. Focusing specifically on Kagame's efforts to Christianize Rwandan oral literature, Kagabo 2005 stands out as a thorough attempt to expose the way Kagame synthesizes African traditional religion and Christian theology. Smet 1976 reads Kagame among African clerical intellectuals, and Mudimbe 2016 provides the most intimate accounts of the struggles of African scholars who emerged from religious education in the region.

Kagabo, Liboire. "Alexis Kagame: The Trail of an African Theology." In *African Theology in the 21st Century: The Contribution of the Pioneers*. Vol. 2. Edited by Bénézet Bujo, 13–44. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005. [ISBN: 9789966087324]

The Burundian friar Kagabo's first lengthy essay focuses on Kagame's attempt to synthesize African traditional religion and Christian theology. He assesses not only its veracity with regard to Christian theology, but also its applicability to Rwanda's oral heritage. The essay is mainly dominated by the theme Imana/God and whether these rather differing terms are interchangeable. He concludes on the cult of ancestors as a meeting point between Christian and African religions. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/701822766>]\*.

Mudimbe, V. Y. "Alexis Kagame, Priest and Scholar, 1912–1981." In *Tales of Faith: Religion as Political Performance in Central Africa*. By V. Y. Mudimbe, 135–145. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. [ISBN: 9781474281386]

One of the most insightful biographical accounts of Kagame's life and oeuvre as well as a comprehensive analysis of his place in the politico-religious context of sub-Saharan Africa. Originally published in the journal *Recherche, Pédagogie et Culture*, Mudimbe's eloquent and articulate account of his fellow Benedictine friend is as unique as it is precious. A must read for anyone interested in making sense of the political and religious contexts in which Kagame operated in Rwanda. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1089439999>]\*. r

Smet, A. J. "Une philosophie sans philosophes? A propos de *La Philosophie bantu comparée* d'Alexis Kagame." *Cahiers des Religions Africaines* 10.19 (January 1976): 125–137.

The Belgian priest A. J. Smet, widely recognized as an early-day advocate of African philosophy, offers in this long essay-review a meticulous evaluation of Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*). He focuses specifically on Kagame's understanding of philosophy and how he practices it as a religious figure. The essay contains numerous extracts of Kagame's work as well as those of his fellow Christian missionaries and contemporaries such as François-Marie Lufuluabo and Ignace-Marcel Tschiamalenga Ntumba. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/473727513>]\*.

## Linguistics

Kagame's work in linguistics still needs to be explored and deciphered in depth. However, a number of scholars have undertaken work to do so. Bwanga wa Mbenga 2018 provides an

overview of the issues as well as a background to the problems. Masolo 1987, Masolo 1994, and Masolo 2003 as well as Mukendi 1977 all attempt to enrich and widen the scope of Kagame's early work. Finally, Balibutsa 2000 takes Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*) to task and expands its linguistic contents dramatically in ontological terms.

Balibutsa, Maniragaba. *Le potentiel ontologique des langues Bantu face à l'ontologie classique*. Libreville, Gabon: Éditions du CICIBA, 2000.

This book makes no reference to Alexis Kagame; however, it is worth citing in as much as it stands uniquely as a continuation not only of Balibutsa's earlier work (Balibutsa 1985 [cited under \*Philosophy\*]) but also of Kagame's entire oeuvre. The Gabon-based Rwandan philosopher takes up the analyses that were left unfinished in Kagame 1976 (cited under \*Works of the 1970s\*) and deepens them with a detailed set of epistemological, linguistic, and ontological analyses on class-based sub-Saharan African languages. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/47280250>]\*.

Bwanga wa Mbenga[non-invertible], Nyoli Boko. *La philosophie du langage d'Alexis Kagame: Contribution à la problématique sur la philosophie africaine*. Paris: L'harmattan, 2018. [ISBN: 9782343119465]

Going against the usual criticisms addressed against ethno-philosophy, the Congolese (DRC) philosopher, Bwanga wa Mbenga, offers a rereading of Kagame's work as a philosophy of language and expounds the argument that a philosophical problem can be addressed only by paying attention to everyday language. He offers a genealogy of predecessors to Kagame's work and a general introduction to his writings. This widely available book on Kagame's oeuvre contains a bibliography and a list of critical texts. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/1089209008>]\*.

Masolo, D. A. "Alexis Kagame and African Socio-linguistics." In *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*. Vol. 5, *African Philosophy*. Edited by Guttorm Fløistad, 181–205. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. [ISBN: 9789024734221] [[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-3517-4\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-3517-4_8)]

Masolo's lengthy essay appears in a volume dedicated to African philosophy. The US-based Kenyan philosopher reasserts the importance of language in any philosophical formulation. Drawing inspiration from Kagame's later work of the 1970s, Masolo argues that language consists of a special manifestation between motional (or physiological) and mental orders. According to him, there can be no philosophy without this linguistic unity of the physical and psychological domains.

Masolo, D. A. "Language & Reality: Alexis

Kagame[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrq7m.7>]\*." In *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*. pp. 84–102. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. [ISBN: 9780748604968]

Included in what is arguably his most famous book, Masolo's chapter critically explores Kagame's understanding of language. It not only gives an overview of Kagame's approach to class-based languages, but it also elucidates how this approach can be understood within the context of a vitalist perspective on life and afterlife. This is done not in comparison to Placide Tempels's *force vitale*, but as a fundamental structure of class-based languages.

Masolo, D. A. "Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledge: An African

Perspective[<https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/8850>]\*." In *Special Issue: Oral Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge*. *Africa Today* 50.2 (Fall–Winter 2003): 21–38.

Published in a special issue of *Africa Today*, Masolo's essay explores the interface between the knowledge drawn from the dynamics of specific social circumstances and contexts and philosophy as a tool that affects these circumstances and contexts. Once more, it relates the work of Kagame with that of Kwasi Wiredu, especially with regard to the way language is used in philosophy

Mukendi, Ntite. “\*Langues africaines et vision du monde (*La Philosophie bantu comparé d’Alexis Kagame*)[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24350642>]\*.” *Présence Africaine* 103 (3rd Trimester 1977): 91–108.

This early and lengthy essay by the Congolese (DRC) politician, grammarian, and writer focuses specifically on expanding further Kagame's linguistic categories. From the perspective of a different language (namely, Luba-Kasai), Mukendi argues that philosophy cannot just be based on linguistic units, it must also take into consideration the mutations and transformations of languages of those who use them. Mukendi then draws key philosophical conclusions from his reading of Kagame's metaphysic.

### Poetry and Translation

This is probably the most underresearched segment of Kagame's enormous output. Part of the reason is that most of his texts are not available outside of the confines of Rwandan university libraries or the personal archives now in the hands of the diocese of Butare (Huye). For example, his eighteen books of poetry, or “eventides,” that still need to be translated include: *Inganji Karinga* (“The victorious drums”) (1943), a history of precolonial Rwanda; *Icara nkumane irungu* – (“Sit down so that I relieve your boredom”) (1947), a record of famine after the Second World War; *Unwaduko w’Abazungu muli Afrika yo hagati* (“White dominance in Africa”) (1947), an account of the arrival of Europeans in Africa; *Iyo wiliwe nta Rungu* (“Where you passed the day, there is no boredom”) (1949), a survey of precolonial Rwandan poetry; *Isoko y’a’amajambere I, II, & III* (“The source of progress I, II, & III”) (1949–1950), a historical analysis of evolution and progress; *Umulirimbyi wa nyili-ibiremwa I, II, & III* (“The singer of the lord of creation I, II, & III”) (1950), a revised account of the history of Christianity, partly translated and published in Kagame 1978 (cited under \*Workd of the 1970s\*); and *Imigami y’imigenurano* (“Traditional games”) (1953), an anthology of 1730 Rwandan proverbs. And this does not include the many other unpublished manuscripts and unfinished projects. However, a few scholars have started doing this work of unpacking and translating his contributions to both poetry and the work of translation. Foremost amongst them is without doubt the much respected expert on Kagame's poetic and literary writing, Anthère Nzabatsinda. Out of his many essays on Kagame in both English and French, only three are given as indicative of his overall scholarly endeavors: Nzabatsinda and Mitsch 1997, Nzabatsinda 1999, and Nzabatsinda 2011. Liboire Kagabo joins Nzabatsinda in his efforts to research, translate, and present Kagame's poetic work (Kagabo 2004). Gishoma 2007 is unique in the way the author presents not only Kagame's poetry, but also his work of translation.

Gishoma, Chantal. “Une facette méconnue d’Alexis Kagame: Le poète-traducteur.” *Études Littéraires Africaines* 24 (2007): 42–47. [<https://doi.org/10.7202/1035344ar>]

A rare analysis of Kagame's work of translation. The Paris-based Rwandan scholar Gishoma analyses Kagame's translations and poetry by emphasizing the way he interprets traditional oral poetry and hijacks its meaning to convey a new facet of Rwandan culture and history. In doing so, Kagame exposes a variety of previously unknown themes in traditional Rwandan

society all the while emphasizing the exceptional aesthetic qualities of poetry written in Kinyarwanda.

Kagabo, Liboire. "Alexis Kagame (1912–1981): Life and Thought." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 231–242. London: Blackwell, 2004. [ISBN: 9780631207511]

Setting aside his interests in theology, Kagabo's essay consists mainly of a short biography, a summary of Kagame's oeuvre, and a precise analysis of his lexicon. However, most importantly, he also argues that Kagame has a place in African history and that his work on Rwandan poetry stands as a unique example of African literary criticism and deserves to be better understood and appreciated. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/843087135>]\*.

Nzabatsinda, Anthère. "'\*Traduttore Traditore'? Alexis Kagame's Transposition of Kinyarwanda Poetry into French[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1771872>]\*." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 12.2 (December 1999): 203–210.

Nzabatsinda's second essay, written again in English, provides a more focused reading of Kagame's laborious efforts to translate Rwandan oral poetry from Kinyarwanda into French. Nzabatsinda argues that Kagame's translation was motivated by a nationalist ideology that aimed to consolidate Rwanda as a self-contained nation in the throes of colonialism.

Nzabatsinda, Anthère. "Symbolique des animaux et des objets chez Alexis Kagame, écrivain du Rwanda." In *Les littératures africaines: Textes et terrains*. Edited by Virginia Coulon and Xavier Garnier, 201–210. Paris: Karthala, 2011. [ISBN: 9782811104375]

In this essay, Nzabatsinda, presents Kagame's poetic work as that of a creative transcriber of both orality and social life. He focuses specifically on the way the Rwandan poet uses animals to perform humorous social critiques. The essay also contains the first translations of extracts from *Iyo wiliwe nta Rungu* (1949). Available \*online[<https://www.cairn.info/les-litteratures-africaines--9782811104375.htm>]\* for purchase.

Nzabatsinda, Anthère, and R. H. Mitsch. "'\*The Aesthetics of Transcribing Orality in the Works of Alexis Kagame, Writer of Rwanda[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3819921>]\*.'" *Research in African Literatures* 28.1 (Spring 1997): 98–111.

The US-based Rwandan Nzabatsinda explores in this lengthy essay written in English with the help of a translator, Kagame's life-long project of identifying, cultivating, protecting, translating, and illustrating a literature that was conceived orally. He critically evaluates the reception of this vast project, its audience, and the impact it is likely to have not only on Rwandese themselves, but also on those abroad through Kagame's own translations of this oral literature.

### Politics, Ethnology, and Sociology

The fields of ethnology and sociology often intersect by the fact that they both arise out of field work. The bulk of the scholarship in these disciplines tends to dismiss Kagame's outputs because of their supposed bias toward a specific ethnic superiority and his affiliation to the precolonial royal court. Vidal is perhaps the most well-known advocate of this criticism (Vidal 1988 and Vidal 1991). This negative perception has been revised and moderated since the genocide of 1994 with new scholarship on the way the clerical elite of Rwanda at the time offered a much more nuanced and ambivalent interpretation of ethnic hierarchies. This scholarship is not included here because it usually takes on a much wider perspective than that of a single author, such as Kagame. It is worth noting, however, that Mureme 2014 takes Kagame's legacy in a

completely different direction, namely using it to the author's own political advances in a radically new post-genocidal context.

Mureme, Bonaventure. *Manuel de sociologie politique rwandaise approfondie (Intekerezo) suivant le modèle Mgr Alexis Kagame*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014. [ISBN: 9782343021560]

The Rwandan historian and political figure Bonaventure Mureme offers in this vast manual a reinterpretation of Kagame's understanding of Rwandan history. It is written in the hope of replacing the manuals put forward by the Ministry of Education of the current Rwandan government. Although it has scientific ambitions, it nonetheless positions itself, sometimes polemically, as a centrist in the political debates within Rwanda and among the diaspora. See \*WorldCat[<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/892585452>]\*.

Vidal, Claudine. “\*Alexis Kagame entre memoire et

histoire[<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3171877>]\*.” *History in Africa* 15 (1988): 493–504.

Vidal is a well-known French sociologist specializing in Rwanda. In this essay, she offers a blistering critique of Kagame, accusing him of using his position close to the court to exert political influence, obfuscating the publication of scholarly endeavours by European researchers, failing to acknowledge previous sources, and misleading Rwandese with a biased interpretation of history. This vitriolic portrait of a Tutsi scholar was written six years before the genocide of 1994

Vidal, Claudine. “Alexis Kagame (1912–1981).” In *Sociologie des passions: Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire*. By Claudine Vidal, 45–61. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1991. [ISBN: 9782865373109]

In this book, the French sociologist Vidal explores a number of beliefs and practices from both Rwanda and the Ivory Coast. She calls them “passions.” She emphasizes Kagame's role in articulating the linguistic origins and structures of Kinyarwanda and, in doing so, in establishing the ideological framework that supported the artificial divide between Tutsis and Hutus. Vidal's work pitches Western approaches to precolonial Rwanda (Jan Vansina's work) against Kagame's elitist and ideologically driven undertakings. Available

\*online[<https://www.cairn.info/sociologie-des-passions--9782865373109.htm>]\* for purchase.