A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE USE IRONY IN HERO DEPICTIONS IN KISWAHILI EPICS OF *MIKIDADI* AND *MAYASA* AND *FUMO LIYONGO*

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ABSTRACT: *This was a comparative study of the use of irony in hero character depictions in the Kiswahili epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo. The objective of the research was: - to do a comparative assessment of the use of irony as a stylistic device of depicting heroism in the Kiswahili Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo. The choice of the research topic was informed by the existing academic gap. Even though many research works have been done on heroism, the researcher is yet to encounter a work on the comparative analysis of the use of irony in depicting heroism in the selected Kiswahili epics of Fumo Liyongo and Mikidadi and Mayasa. This paper was guided by the theory of Formalism by Victor Shykslovsky (1904) and expounded by Vile Bies and Roman Jacobson 1919. This theory points out clearly that literary works should have distinctive features like form and literary strategies in depictions. This research was library-based. Different libraries including e-library were used. The target population was Kiswahili epics, and, purposefully, two Kiswahili epics were sampled: The Epic of Fumo Liyongo (Kijumwa, 1913) and The Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa (Bashir, 1972). Data was collected by use of content analysis. The selected Kiswahili epics were read indepthly. Specific data connected with the objective were documented as guided by the theory of Formalism and The Readers' Response Theory, and then cross-checked in a comparative way. Data was then analyzed descriptively and the results were presented in a written document. The research assessed comparatively the contexts of irony in various contexts in the selected epics. The research concluded that even though the contexts contradicted the expectations of the readers about a true hero in a community, irony was purposefully used to show heroism. The result in this research paper is expected to be an important source of reference to scholars of this topic of heroism in Kiswahili epics. This research is a bridge to future research and it is an important addition to works already done on heroism in Kiswahili epics.*

KEYWORDS: Foregrounding, Textual Meaning, Context, Iconicity.

INTRODUCTION

Stylistics is an interdisciplinary field situated between literary studies and linguistics. Literary stylistics is a practice of analyzing the language of literature using linguistic concepts and categories, with the goal of explaining how literary meanings are created by specific language choices and patterning the linguistic foregrounding in the text. While stylistics has periodically claimed to be objective, replicable, inspectable, falsifiable and rigorous, and thus quasi-scientific, subjective interpretation is an ineradicable element of such textual analysis.

The writers of the selected epics used many forms of literary stylistics; among them is irony. Irony is defined as an occurrence that is the opposite of what is expected. Literary theorists, by contrast, have taken a broad notion of context as an essential element when analyzing irony, as evidenced by the well-known studies carried out by Muecke (1970), Hutcheon (1994), and Colebrook (2004). These literary critics take the notion of context as a set of conventions and individual perceptions.

Irony may be used as a rhetorical device to enforce one's meaning. It may be used as a satiric device to attack a point of view or to expose folly, hypocrisy, or vanity. It may be used as a heuristic device to lead one's readers to see that things are not so simple or certain as they seem, or perhaps not so complex or doubtful as they seem. Irony is widely used by the writers of the selected epics in contexts that predict heroism.

Renowned scholars like Carlyle (1924), D. Kunene (1971), Gichamba (2005) and Mutiso (1999) claim that Kiswahili epics are heroic. In this context, the form and literary styles are involved in depicting heroism. The researcher got interested in assessing the use of irony in depicting heroism in the selected epics, because the contexts in which the style is used show the direct opposite of the expectations of a hero character. Equally, the researcher has not come across work done on the use of irony in hero depiction in the selected epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo.* Therefore, this research paper assessed the irony of hero depictions in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo.*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

Muecke (1969) suggests that the interpreter will only achieve the ironic meaning through textual and contextual signals and further explains that the ironic act is at all times framed in a socio-cultural context that comprises the communicative act (ironist, interpreter, and text). This author acknowledges the evolution of the concept of irony according to its historical and artistic context, which determines its usage. The difference between Muecke and this current research is that this research is specific on the use of irony in selected epics to depict heroism.

Muecke's research was fundamental to this research because irony has been used in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo to* depict heroism. The judgement was aimed at verifying how irony was used to depict heroism in various contexts in the selected epics.

Wilson and Sperber (2012) explain that irony involves echoing a thought (e.g., a belief, an intention, a norm-based expectation) attributed to an individual, a group or to people in general, and expressing a mocking, skeptical or critical attitude towards this thought. Further, Mendoza

(2017) points out that irony involves a clash between an echoic scenario and an observable scenario in the mind of the speaker. Out of this collision arises the attitudinal component of irony. Both Wilson and Sperber and Mendoza tried to illustrate how irony can be achieved in literature. In their discussion, the scenario in the mind of the reader or speaker determines how irony will be explained in a context. These research works were different from this particular research because this research aimed at showing how irony can be extracted by the reader from a textual context. This was a point of convergence between their work and this research. Their research was important because it formed a foundation of developing and assessing comparatively how heroism has been depicted ironically in various contexts in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo*.

Muecke (1970), Booth (1974), and Colebrook (2004) have classified irony according to different historical and artistic periods explaining its usage in context. However, they did little in their work to classify other components of irony. The approach they followed portrays the ironist and the interpreter as variable categories. Hence, when one analyzes instances of irony, he or she may encounter different types of ironists and interpreters. This formed the difference between their research and this current research. In this research, the writer is resuming the position of an ironist and the interpreter is the reader. The reader interpreted how irony was used to depict heroism in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo.*

Theoretical Framework

Formalism Theory

According to Wafula and Kimani (2007), formalism was started by the Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1915. Members of this group included Roman Jacobson, Osip Brik, Victor Shklovsky, Boris Eichenbaun and Tynyanov. The proponent of the current formalism was Victor Shyklovsky who developed it in the year 1965.

Formalism is a type of literary theory and criticism that focuses on the stylistic purity of a work of literature rather than its social contexts and authorial intent. According to formalism, it is possible to interpret a text without having any information on its author or its social or historical background; the interaction of literary devices creates an impression of reality within a text, and, therefore, it is more important to study these devices rather than the social realities they represent. A central component of formalism is the close study of stylistic and rhetorical devices. These include: Imagery, Symbolism, Metaphor and Simile, Irony and Paradox, Alliteration, Assonance, and Rhyme. These elements are not merely decorative; in formalist analysis, they are important in constructing a text's meaning.

The main tenet of this theory is that any literature work should have a distinctive form and specific literary devices that drive the message to the audience. Every genre has distinctive features and uses specific literary devices when delivering the message to the audience. This research paper used many literary devices, but the researcher purposefully picked the use of irony to depict heroism in the epics of *Mikidadi* and *Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo*.

Readers' Response Theory

This research employed the readers' response theory. Readers' response theory was developed by Louise Rosenblatt in 1930. Other proponents like Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, and Iser contributed significant variations and extensions to this theory. Readers' Response Theory is a critical framework that emphasizes the active role of readers in the process of interpreting and constructing meanings from literary texts. Readers' Response Theory rejects the notion of a fixed, objective meaning inherent in a text and instead highlights the subjective and individualized nature of reading experiences. It suggests that readers bring their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the act of reading, shaping their understanding and response to a text. By focusing on the active engagement between reader and text, Readers' Response Theory underscores the significance of reader-centered approaches in literary analysis and the dynamic nature of interpretation.

Basically, this theory argues that:

- Meaning in the text is created through the reader's interaction with it.

- Each reader brings their own experiences, emotions, and cultural background, which shape how they understand a text.

- The act of reading is a dynamic, participatory process—more like a conversation than a lecture.

Key Tenets

1. Subjective Interpretation: Every reader may interpret a text differently based on personal context.

2. Transactional Reading: Coined by Louise Rosenblatt, this idea sees reading as a transaction between the text and the reader, not a one-way transfer of meaning.

3. Implied Reader: Wolfgang Iser introduced this concept to describe the hypothetical reader a text seems to be addressing.

4. Interpretive Communities: Stanley Fish argues that readers belong to communities that shape how they interpret texts.

5. Multiplicity of Meaning: There is no single "correct" interpretation; multiple readings are valid and even encouraged.

The paper engaged the tenets mentioned above in anchoring the concept that themes in the selected epics are literally placed to depict heroism in the selected epics.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design deals with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or a group. Its purpose is to explore and understand people's experience, meanings, beliefs, or social contexts. Qualitative studies are mainly used to investigate social issues; therefore, they help the researcher solve social problems. This study examined the comparative use of irony in various contexts to depict heroism in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo.*

Using the tenets of Formalism and The Readers' Response theories, the researcher collected data by use of content analysis. The selected Kiswahili epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* were read indepthly. Specific data connected with the objective were documented as guided by Formalism and the Readers' Response Theory. The data was then cross-examined in a view to prove, if in any way, that the selected themes assisted to arouse the heroic traits of the hero characters. Data was then analyzed descriptively, and results were documented in this research paper. The research confirmed with evidence that the epics of *Mikidadi* and *Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* employed specific themes in depicting heroism among hero characters in the Kiswahili epics.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In regard to this research paper, characters who propagate heroism have unique traits which make them heroes. Although regarded as heroes, some of their traits contravene heroic traits in the view of this research paper. Some of the characteristics are ironically used to show heroism and yet they display the opposite of what the reader expects of a true African hero. The research paper identified the use of irony in a number of contexts in the selected epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo to* show heroic character traits as follows:

Super Thinking Abilities

Jabbar (2004), in his research in the *Epics of Beowulf and Sir Gawain* and *Sir the Green Knight*, noticed the use of the super talent of thinking as a heroic trait that helped heroes to avoid harm from enemies. Though this was research done in Wales in England, it has close connection to the hero characters in the selected Kiswahili epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo.* Jabbar's work was in support of Okpewho (1979) who unleashed traits an African epic hero should portray. Among them, is the uniqueness in physical strength, super thinking talents, spiritual powers, family cohesion among others. The writer uses irony in depicting hero characters by undermining their heroic trait of using their minds to notice a trap that is meant to ruin them and avoid it. The following heroic traits were ironically used with the intention of depicting heroism.

King Daudi Mringwari had made several attempts to kill Fumo Liyongo without succeeding. He therefore decided to lure Liyongo's son to interrogate his father about what could kill him. In verses 135 and 136, the son approached his father in quest of what could kill him. It is ironical for a hero like Liyongo that he learnt the evil plan his son had in verse 136, but still went ahead to expose the secret that he could only be killed if a silver nail was inserted right into his naval in verse

1.Verse 135:

"Kikuuwacho ni n'ni
Nami niyuwe haya
Nina hamu ya moyoni
Atakuweka jaliya.

2. Verse 136:

Baba akamwambiya
" Wewe kuuliza haya
Dhana nimekudhaniya
Kuniuwa huzengeya."

3. Verse 143:

"Nisikiya wangu baba
Liniuwalo ni haba
Ni msumari wa shaba
Kitovuni nikitiya.

Irony was used to show a trait that readers would not expect from a hero like Fumo Liyongo. Liyongo foresaw that his son was being used to betray him by begging him to unfold the secret of his death. He even advised his son in verse 141 that those that sent him would reject him later and even disown him. Being a hero, he used this unique ability of foretelling danger to predict that his son was being used to kill him, but it was ironical that he still chose to expose himself to this trap. This research concluded that the writer used irony to show that a hero's death is usually a huge secret. The death of a hero mostly happened after a family member betrayed the hero. The writer planned to unfold the death of the hero since the time King Daudi Mringwari allowed the Gala people to marry off their daughter to Liyongo. Fumo Liyongo, being a loving father, blindly gave in to his son's quest to know what could kill him, in verse 143. The writer tells the reader how it happened in the verses below:

4. Verse 141
"Baba umehadaika
wao kisa watateka
na kuzifanya dhihaka
kisa utaiyutiya.

In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the reader would learn that it was a foolish and unheroic move for Mikidadi to party with his in-laws without sensing any trap set on him. In verses 667-668, Jabiri wrote to Maliki Bin Riyahi asking him to come over and marry Mayasa because Mikidadi had been killed and his wife was back to his father. Of course, that was not true, because Mikidadi was to come back after three months and it was not over. Jabiri simply wanted to do away with Mikidadi and marry off his daughter to the rich Maliki Bin Riyahi. It was clear to Mikidadi that his father-in-law had direct communication with his enemy, and yet he trusted him to organize a wedding party for him. He even agreed to drink beer and get intoxicated, making himself helpless. This incident proved that Mikidadi had fallen short of his super thinking abilities as a hero. The writer uses this literary style to show how Mikidadi and other characters in the epic would use heroic traits to overcome traps. This incident of trapping Mikidadi into intoxication was necessary so that Mikidadi's spiritual powers would be exposed.

During this hard time, Mikidadi prayed hard and sought Prophet Muhamad's intervention. This was heroic and it expressed one of the key traits of an African hero who should be guided by spiritual powers. The reader would be able to learn about the heroic roles of other characters like Ali and Mikidadi's mother, Tamima. The verse below explains this:

5. Verse 689	6. Verse 690
Ikampata sakara	*Hata zikija akili*
Kapotewa na fikira	*amefungwa silisili*
Wakanenda na kambata	*na mapingu ya rujuli*
Ikawa kumtatia.	*Mikidadi akalia.*

It was ironical that he never utilized his supernatural thinking abilities to predict that it was a trap to eliminate him, so that Jabiri would create room for Malik to marry Mayasa. Irony was used to capture Mikidadi and hand him over to his enemy, Maliki Bin Riyahi, as shown in verse 689 below:

7. Verse 689
Ikampata sakara
Kapotewa na fikira
Wakenenda na kambata
ikiwa kumtatia.

The writer employs irony in this way, so that the reader can see how Mikidadi was a daring hero. Through this trap, readers would believe that the end of Mikidadi had come. Readers would believe that Mikidadi would be killed while in the cell of Malik Bin Riyahi. The irony here gives Mikidadi the upper hand because he heroically fought for his freedom and even killed the captor and his soldiers, as shown in the verse 752 below:

8. Verse 752
Kamtinda binafusi
Kamkata yake rasi
Roho yake kwa upesi
Motoni ikenda tiwa.

Strong and Scary

According to scholars like Jabbar (2003), a hero should be a darling of the people whom they always want to be associated with. A hero is a source of attraction within his environment; he is an icon of reference therein. According to Hitchens (1971) and Allen (1971) in the research about heroism in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the researcher identifies Mikidadi and Mayasa as a hero. On the other hand, the researcher identifies Fumo Liyongo as a hero in the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*.

In this *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, the writer portrays Liyongo as a strong and scary person. Because of his body, excessive energy and actions, Liyongo scared his people as well as his neighbors. The writer says, when Fumo Liyongo appeared before the Gala people, they got so scared that some peed uncontrollably. He equally scared people by blasting three horns as he blew them to announce his entry to the palace. He was so powerful that he blasted the horns with a single blow. King Daudi Mringwari confirmed this by narrating how strong and heroic Fumo Liyongo was. It was ironical that Liyongo scared people who were supposed to embrace him as a treasure to his community. Why could the King describe Liyongo as a monster if he really cherished him as a treasure to his kingdom? This irony was meant to demonstrate Liyongo as someone with godly strengths and talents. This was well explained in verses 12 and 13. In extract 12, the writers say:

9. Verse 12
Mfalme kawambia
Wagalla kiwasifiya
Huwagema watu miya
Wasiweze kukimbiya.

This mind-blowing trait inspired the Gala people to request the king to marry off their daughter to Fumo Liyongo. It is ironical that the Gala who were presumed enemies visited King Daudi Mringwari to witness and confirm that Fumo Liyongo was such a unique hero. Historically, the writer confirms that the Gala people were believed to be the warriors of the forest and were in constant fights with their neighbors, including the Pate people. Although they did business with the Pate people, the Gala people were historical enemies with the Pate. It was in one of these business trips that the king got a chance to showcase his warrior, Fumo Liyongo, to his enemies. The king wrote to Fumo Liyongo and he replied in acceptance in verse 21, as indicated below:

10. Verse 21
Na Liyongo akajibu
Kwa hishima na adabu
"Nitakuja kwa karibu
Nitwiiye Maulaya."

The Gala envoy visited the king at the palace and after witnessing and confirming that indeed Fumo Liyongo was a hero, they requested the king to marry off their daughter to Fumo Liyongo so that they could get a child to be a hero replica of this man. This ironical request was highly accepted by the king. Why would the king accept to marry Fumo Liyongo, a lady from his enemies? It is ironical too that this very king masquerading to be proud of Fumo Liyongo was looking for every possible way to eliminate him. He feared that Fumo Liyongo was so famous and heroic that he would one day snatch the kingship from him. He agreed to have the Gala people marry off their daughter to Fumo Liyongo, without hesitation. The writer uses this style to show that the king could unite with his enemies in order to find a possible way to eliminate

Fumo Liyongo, who was a hero. The secret of the death of a hero would be known from this arrangement. He therefore accepted the request of the Gala people in verse 43, as shown below:

11. Verse 43
Sulutwani kitamka
Liyongo akaridhika
masharuti kayaweka
wakikiri t'aridhiya.

Fumo Liyongo was eventually killed by his son who ironically was supposed to be a replica of his father. This betrayal is shown in verse 179:

12. Verse 179
Kamtiya kitovuni
Naye ulele kwa t'ani
Achamka hamuoni
Kiyana amekimbiya.

It was ironical that Fumo Liyongo's son knew that he was going to suffer once he agreed to the enticement given by the king to kill his father, and yet he went ahead to kill him with the hope of getting a good life afterwards. He suffered without any help until he died. He was never given medication nor food. He at last died unattended to by even his mother. It was ironical that he never made the wise decision to avoid the consequences. The agony that followed him is shown in verses 139, 214, 215, 216, 219, 221 222 and 223 of the epic:

13. Verse 139

"Tanipa kula ni nyani
Na nguo za muilini
Nipate na masikani
Mahala kupumuliya."

14. Verse 223

Siku chache kitimiya
Maradhi yakamwingiya
Yasiyomuondokeya
Naye kisa kaifiya.

It is ironical that the cell guards were busy stealing food and never checked on the prisoner. The writer tells us about the poor governance at the cells of the Pate Kingdom in an ironical way. The guards were so undisciplined that they were eating prisoners' food. When Fumo Liyongo realized this, he used his heroic thinking power to make a poem with a special message and sent it to his mother. In the message, Fumo Liyongo asked his mother to prepare two loaves of bread—one that was sweet and one that was not. He used his heroic power to deceive the guards who never realized the trick. As they scrambled for the sweet bread, he took a file which was hidden in the other bread and cut off his chains. It is ironical that the guards never checked for the safety of the items entering into the cell. The writer uses this case ironically to show how wise Fumo Liyongo was and how he closely worked with his mother and their maid who was called Saad. The verse below proves that, indeed, the writer's intention is to show the heroic nature of Fumo Liyongo over the guards. He emerged from the cell free, scared everyone including the security details and made it to the bushes freely. The guards were unable to re-arrest him afterwards because he was too strong for them to dare confront him. They all feared that he would kill them if they followed him into the bushes. This is ironical as well because there were many and they had weapons against him who was without any weapon. Follow verse 116-118 in the epic:

15. Verse 116

Zilipo kikaza kusi
Alikika upesi
Hata zikikoma basi
Inukani kawambiya.

16. Verse 118

Kwa wut'e wakakimbiya
hapana alosaliya
khaufu zaliwakaza
mbiyo zikawapokeya.

Irony is used when King Daudi Mringwari gave Fumo Liyongo a chance to ask for his last wish before he would be murdered. The offer was ironical because the king had tried previously to kill Liyongo; therefore, he could have just killed him without such further delays. Why was he behaving humanely and yet wanted to kill Liyongo? He even organized a dancing event at the palace for all community members to attend and possibly witness the murder of the hero. The reader would not expect that Liyongo was to enjoy himself by dancing Gungu dance and then be killed afterwards. Ironically, Liyongo chose Gungu and Mwau dances, which were ironically symbolic. Gungu and Mwau dances were for a ceremony. Mwao was played to make a bridegroom happy a night before his marriage, while Gungu was to celebrate ceremonies like good harvest of the year, by community members. These dances were both ceremonial and yet there was no happy ceremony on that occasion. The reader remained with questions like, was the killing of Fumo Liyongo an issue to celebrate? Maybe Daudi Mringwari would have celebrated but definitely not the community members who in the first place loved Liyongo as their hero. The writer ironically wants to depict how victorious Liyongo would emerge from the tight security of the king. His

magic in dancing Gungu was being shown as a hero of that dance. The celebrations for that occasion are shown in verse 111-115. Follow the event in the verses below:

17. Verse 112

Na ngoma na nyingi kusi
Kusisalie unasi
Ikawa kama harusi
Watu wakiangaliya.

18. Verse 114

Wakatandika za zari
na libasi hariri
wakaimba mashairi
ngoma na kusi pamoya.

In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, Mayasa declared war against her suitors. She vowed that she would only get married to a man who could overpower her in a physical fight. She proved to be a heroine by overpowering most of them and even killing some in that fighting context. Mayasa is one the few women in the epics that had fights against men. Mayasa is central in the conflicts of the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*. She did display many of the traits of an African epic hero, as illustrated by Okpewho (1975).

Ironically, Mayasa has been depicted as a scary character. Mayasa scared many men during the fights. This trait contradicts the kind of hero she is required to be. She magically flew her machete and other weapons in the air in a manner that scared people around. She shouted and made scary noises like a goddess. In verses 33 and 34, she made magical turns on her war horse unlike men, and this scared people. So, it was ironical that people would run away from her, instead of being attracted to her, as it is supposed to be for heroes in a community.

19. Verse 33

Naye Mayasa aringa
Maidani kwa upanga
Na ambaye ajitenga
Akenda hatarejea.

20. Verse 34

Husema akijighani
Ali juu farasini
Wawapi mashujaa
Watamanio kuoa.

She shouted disrespectfully at prominent suitors who had come to seek her hand in marriage, and this was scary to them, depicting the irony of heroism in that context. She demanded that any man wishing to seek her marriage consent should stand up and confront her in a fight. This scared most of the suitors who had to run away.

21. Verse 57

Na fumole na upanga
Na ngaoye ya kukinga
Utamboni akiringa
Na shairi akitowa.

22. Verse 58

Kawapigia kelele
Akiweta ndoni mbele
Mume wangu anitwale
Nami nipo nangojea.

In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa,* the writer uses irony to show how Mikidadi destroyed strong armies alone, and yet he had no military training and he was alone. The reader would expect that the armies would at least fight back and definitely arrest or kill Mikidadi. In another fight in verse 329 of the epic, Mikidadi killed many soldiers of the kingdom of Kisiri. The king deployed more strong and intelligent soldiers for the third time to fight Mikidadi. The writer says that Mikidadi got more furious and used more magical war tricks to bring the whole army down. He killed four hundred soldiers in that war. This caused more fear to the king and, thus, news spread about Mikidadi to the desert route users. The lucky soldiers who survived the attack ran for their dear lives, leaving the general behind to go and report the incident to King Kisiri. These incidents are explained in verses 329 and 330 as follows:

23. Verse 329
Aloua siku hiyo
 Mashujaa wanenayo
Hisabu nilonayo
Shujaa aruba mia.

24. Verse 330
Nabaki wasalio
Jamii wakenda mbio
Waama amiri wao
Asirithi kukimbiya.

Mikidadi caused unrest in the desert. He would confront the armies who were escorting their convoys and start a fight with them and magically win. He became more animalistic by attacking and killing innocent traders using the desert route so that he could gain wealth to use for the dowry. Those who escaped death would get scared and run as fast as they could for their dear lives. This completely ruined the normal activities in the region. Mikidadi is to be blamed because of his savage nature in attacking and fighting the armies. The route users were innocent because they were using their normal route to operate their businesses. In verse 316, the writer shows how ruthless Mikidadi was. He would meet and confront a passing army in their normal trade trip by scaring and fighting them without mentioning a word, and eventually kill and injure many of them. Those who remained alive ran away, leaving Mikidadi with all the wealth behind. The reader would see this as a savagery way of life, but it was ironically used to portray Mikidadi as a hero. Through these confrontations, Mikidadi ended up being a victor, and, therefore, the reader declared him a hero. These animalistic traits were ironically used to trigger the heroic traits in confronting hard life decisions, which were to otherwise indict Mikidadi as a weakling. He used great power in fighting and did not lose hope because he was from a poor family background; he instead marched onward until he married Mayasa, and also created lots of wealth by robbing and killing people and from gifts presented to him during his desert trip. His spiritual power was evident in these occasions. This is well illustrated in verse 316 below:

25. Verse 316
Wakenda wakakutana
Wasiuzane majina
Ikawa kulemeana
Wote wakamlemea.

The writer of the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* uses irony in his epic. For instance, Mikidadi had previously fought with Malik Riyahi's soldiers and was able to recover Mayasa from the forced marriage attempt. In this war, it was ironical that Mikidadi was able to fight the whole battalion of Malik and beat them singlehandedly. Under normal circumstances, the reader would expect that Mikidadi would be crushed under the huge and well-trained army of Malik, but the opposite was the case. Mikidadi won the battle. In another occasion, when Mikidadi came to present his interest in courting Mayasa, he started by direct confrontation with innocent suitors who came for the same purpose. He killed many of them and some had to run away for their lives. This scared everyone in that arena. Nobody expected that another man would stage a fight against the fellow suitors, so this was very scary behavior exhibited by Mikidadi. In verse 85, the writer says Mikidadi entered into the arena like a ghost and made a thunderous sound which left people dead confused. Even Mayasa herself confessed that she had never seen a person with such magical styles of attack. Mikidadi was really hot-tempered, which contravened expected heroic traits. He was not able to control his temper and, therefore, he inhumanely attacked and killed people without provocative reasons. This is well indicated in the verses below:

26. Verse 86
Akaingia   kati mwao
Kawatawanya wambao
Wenye ndoa watakao
Kiwakata kiwaua.

27. Verse 87
Wote walipomuona
Wakastaajabu sana
Yule ambaye awana
Na silaha   akitwaa.

The writer successfully uses irony to show how unique Mikidadi and Mayasa were in their community. By the use of irony, the reader was able to interpret the natural heroic ability that Mikidadi and Mayasa depicted to overcome social challenges which were impossible to other community members.

Hypocrisy and Betrayal

Hypocrisy and betrayal are vices of a hero's strong family cohesion as a tenet of an African hero. An African hero should have close cohesion with his or her family or community members. In the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, the writer uses irony to show the hypocrisy of the king. After he succeeded in using Liyongo's son to kill his father, he rejected and even condemned the boy. Readers would expect that the boy would be rewarded for assisting the king in killing his enemy, but the opposite was the case. The king took away all the benefits he had given Liyongo's son and even sent him back to the Gala people who he openly confessed in verse 215 as being enemies. Irony in this case was a flashback to show that it was necessary for the king to use Liyongo's son to kill the hero, Liyongo. Without Liyongo's son, nobody would know what could cause the death of the hero. In verse 208-217, the king cursed and sent the boy out of his kingdom. The king ironically became furious at Fumo Liyongo's son in verse 214 and sent him away from his kingdom, as shown below:

28. Verse 213
Mfalme kabaini
"kabisa huna imani
epuka mwangu motoni
na nyumbani nitokeya.

29. Verse 214
"Usiketi mui wangu
Wewe adui ya mngu
Tena vua nguo zangu,
Vaa yako mezoweya

At last, the real picture in the mind of the king was exposed to the reader. The writer uses a flashback to tell the reader that even the arranged marriage between Liyongo and a Gala girl was a form of betrayal and hypocrisy that broke family cohesion. The king knew all along that the Gala people were his historical enemies, and therefore even the son of Fumo Liyongo was an enemy because he was a descendant of the Gala people. The reader would conclude that King Daudi Mringwari strategically arranged for Fumo Liyongo to marry from their enemy so that the child born would be used to kill Fumo Liyongo. The king at last confessed this in verse 215 below:

30. Verse 215
"Kuwa mwana wa Kigala
ni adui wa dhalala
ya babakwe amekula
damu kwa kuiuliya.

Hypocrisy and betrayal were key in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*. The writer uses irony when Jabiri prepared a wedding party for Mikidadi and yet he actually planned to kill him. In verse 644, Jabiri used hypocrisy to confess to Mikidadi and pretended to appreciate that Mikidadi had recovered Mayasa from Malik's army. He pretended to appreciate that Mikidadi had brought back wealth for his marriage. Jabiri betrayed Mikidadi by writing a letter to Malik to come and repossess Mayasa after he intoxicated Mikidadi during his wedding party. This happened in verse 669. This was a clear betrayal from a father-in-law. He arranged to throw a party for Mikidadi after realizing that the latter had come back and had actually recovered Mayasa, who had already been married off to Malik Bin Riyahi, from Malik's army. Mikidadi drank beer and became drunk; he was therefore arrested without any resistance and handed over to Malik in verse 689 to 692. The writer confirms this in the verse below:

31. Verse 689

Ikampata sakara
Kapotewa na fikira
Wakenda na kambara
Ikawa kumtalia.

32. Verse 691

Akalia kwa Mayowe
hino dunia ya lewe
ee msiba wa kuwe
mamaye kamlilia.

The trait of hypocrisy and betrayal shown by family members worked ironically in Mikidadi's arrest. He was intoxicated and helpless to defend himself. It is ironical that his father-in-law

received the dowry and yet went ahead to betray Mikidadi. The writer uses this stylistic device to show that Mikidadi had the magical powers of a hero that would set him free. It also indicated that neither Malik nor Jabiri had the strength to attack and win a normal fight with Mikidadi.

The writers of the two epics of *Fumo Liyongo* and *Mikidadi and Mayasa* used irony successfully to show heroism. It was used in various heroic trait depictions in the epics, but this research singles out hypocrisy and betrayal of family members, poor use of super thinking abilities of the heroes, and traits of being scary and strong among community members, as evidenced above.

DISCUSSION

Irony, as explained in the Theory of Formalism, is a stylistic device that when used in literature indicates the opposite of what the readers expect in the context. Both the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* have used irony in specific thematic contexts. These contexts are inclined towards the universal traits of an African hero. Okpewho (1975) listed some characteristics an African hero needs to have. An African hero can come from a famous family or a normal family, they are majestic with excessive strength, their life is connected with spiritual powers, and they have close cohesion with the family or a group in community. It is through these traits that the research was able to show how irony was used to depict heroism in the selected epics.

In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the writer uses irony to depict Mikidadi and Mayasa as being scary and ruthless hero characters, and yet the reader would expect a hero who could protect lives and be embraced and emulated by the community. According to Kabira (1988), a hero should be loved and cherished by his or her community as a result of giving them protection against enemies or danger. Irony is well developed by use of the themes of heroism, marriage and family cohesion in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo*. Engagement and marriage are themes that usually bring happiness and harmony in a society. Marriage in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* was horrific. Mayasa fought with her suitors to choose the best from them. She believed whoever could beat her in that fight would be picked to be her husband. The suitors had to fight with Mayasa in order to win her love and acceptance for marriage. This act is not normal in the normal African setting, where a father can marry off his daughter without such conditions like fighting suitors. These engagement fights caused injuries, blood shed and even death to some weak suitors. Armies were destroyed and there was a general loss of property and peace in families.

The research paper found out that the writer purposefully used irony to arouse the curiosity of why readers had to accept Mikidadi and Mayasa as heroes. During these fights, Mayasa displayed strong and war-like traits which earned her heroism. Through this engagement, the research found out that Mayasa had a strong family cohesion. It is through this family cohesion that the writer displayed the negative trait of Mayasa's father as a greedy, hypocritic villain. He betrayed Mikidadi by causing a conflict between Malik and Mikidadi. He maliciously engaged Malik Bin Riyahi to marry Mayasa without Mayasa's consent. Jabiri, who was Mayasa's father, wanted Mayasa to marry Malik because Malik was rich, although Mayasa had accepted to marry Mikidadi, being the hero she wanted. This was ironically used to show that a hero had to be stronger and war-like to marry Mayasa. The writer explains some of the scenes in verse 82, 86, 126, 352, and

602. In these verses, the writer portrays heroism in the direct opposite way of the expectations of the reader.

Mikidadi earned the acceptance to marry Mayasa but his father-in-law stood against his intentions by slapping him with a heavy dowry demand. He accepted to pay and therefore opted to go on a robbing spree in the desert. The irony in this trip is that Mikidadi was a hero who the reader would expect to have some dignity regarding mankind and also employ morality in the society, but he ended up being savagery by killing innocent passersby. He confronted famous leaders like King Luhani and killed him alongside his soldiers, in verse 216 of the epic. He stole from them and continued attacking others. Ironically, this hero wanted to marry Mayasa and make his father-in-law happy using stolen wealth. They all knew that Mikidadi was poor but they accepted to wait for the magical delivery of the dowry from him. The writer uses irony to show the war-like hero trait in Mikidadi. He was fearless and went for what he wanted without agreeing to beliefs like societal morals. In verse 82, Mikidadi joined the race of courtship fight and yet he had neither a horse nor a war gear. It is ironical although heroic that Mikidadi forced himself into this courtship war and won, and yet the other suitors who had experience and war gear failed. This shows that Mikidadi was actually disadvantaged but he was more heroic than all the others. The writer wants to show the heroic nature of Mikidadi regardless of his social background. He was underestimated by his mother and uncle as being inexperienced in war activities and too poor to afford Mayasa. This was all ironical because Mikidadi used his heroic trait to fight and win Mayasa's trust, and then fought to get the huge dowry used to sponsor his intentions. The irony behind all this is to show that Mikidadi was a hero and he would not be deterred by any condition to marry Mayasa.

Comparatively, the irony used in the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo* on the themes of engagement and marriage is different. Daudi Mringwari only accepted the request made by the Gala people to marry off their daughter to Liyongo. The Gala people did that after confirming the heroic nature of Fumo Liyongo. Although there was no fight to prove that Liyongo was strong and war-like, his body physique and characteristics indicated that he was truly a hero. He had a big body with strong muscles that fitted the illustrations given by King Daudi Mringwari about him. This convinced the Gala people so much so that the irony in this marriage is that the Gala people believed that Liyongo was a hero and could bear their community a child as strong as he was. This child was expected to be just as heroic as his father. The writer uses this marriage to draw the reader close to Liyongo's fate. King Daudi Mringwari feared that Liyongo might snatch him the kingship; he therefore plotted to eliminate Liyongo. This was betrayal from a family member just like in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*. After several attempts, the king opted to use Liyongo's son to discover the secret of Liyongo's death. The son out of greed accepted to betray his father and risked his fear that he could be discarded by the king after killing his father. This was an indication that Liyongo's death was that of a hero; therefore, it was not easy to kill him. The king needed a close family member to kill Liyongo. Liyongo's son was used to seal the fate of his father by killing him after disclosing how he could be killed to his beloved son. Therefore, ironically, this son turned out to be a villain to show that Liyongo was indeed a hero. In his death, community members recognized him as their fallen hero and life was not the same for everyone afterwards.

CONCLUSION

The research paper found out that irony was a strong stylistic literary device to depict heroism in both the epics of *Fumo Liyongo* and *Mikidadi and Mayasa*. Irony was used in different contexts differently but it successfully depicted heroism in the epics. Irony was used to show the hidden heroic traits of characters in the direct opposite of what the readers would expect. Therefore, the writer uses irony to allow the reader to think more deeply on the heroic trait depicted by the characters in specific contexts in the selected epics.

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