



A COMPARATIVE CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF SOCIETAL INSTITUTIONS IN MOLDING HEROISM IN THE KISWAHILI EPIC MIKIDADI AND MAYASA AND FUMO LIYONGO

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ABSTRACT: *This was a comparative contextual analysis of the role of societal institutions in molding heroism in the Kiswahili Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo. The objective of the research was: to comparatively assess the influence of institutions in molding 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 investigation of societal institutions that molds heroism in the Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo. This research was guided by the Reader's Response Theory. The Reader's Response Theory suggests that readers bring their unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives to the act of reading, shaping their understanding and response to a text. It therefore underscores the significance of reader-centered approaches in literary analysis and the dynamic nature of interpretation. This research was library based. Different libraries including e-library were used. The target population was Kiswahili epics, and the research purposefully sampled the epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa (Bashir 1972) and Fumo Liyongo (1913). Data was collected by use of content analysis by reading the selected Kiswahili epics in depth. Specific data connected with the objective was documented as guided by the theory and then cross-checked to confirm how the institutions assisted in depicting a hero. Data was then analyzed descriptively, with results presented in a written document. The research assessed the influence of themes like culture, economy, death and betrayal in hero depictions in the selected epics. The result of the research 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 research works already done on heroism in Kiswahili epics.*

KEYWORDS: Institutions, connections, landmarks, context.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of institution has been regularly used among scholars to describe cherished socio-cultural landmarks of groups, time-honored traditions or ancestral structures and sites. However, sociologists view social institutions in a broader perspective as complex social relationships among people directed toward satisfying basic needs, including giving protection. These institutions are passed on to generations through community channels like literature. There are many literature genres that can be used to educate people in a society. Among them are Epics. An epic is a long narrative poem that is elevated and dignified in theme, tone, and style. As a literary device, an epic celebrates heroic deeds and historically (or even cosmically) important events. An epic usually focuses on the adventures of a hero who has qualities that are superhuman or divine, and on whose very fate often depends the destiny of a tribe, nation, or sometimes the whole of the human race.

Epic heroism is a study of interest to many researchers in the world. Okpewho (1979) did a comparative research on European and African epics. In his study, he came to the conclusion that Africa has epics similar to the European epics in many aspects. He singled out the theme of heroism. He said that African epics have heroes and heroines too, although with specified universal African traits. He listed these traits as follows: an African hero should be a person from a high-class family or a standard class family; African heroes should have unique talents like being very strong, fearless, and other unique characteristics from the other community members. Heroes should be accompanied with spiritual powers, and have very close ties with a special group in the society.

Scholars like Carlyle (1924), D. Kunene (1971), Gichamba (2005) and Mutiso (1999) have made a claim that Kiswahili epics are heroic. The *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* has been purposefully sampled because it has heroic activities. Heroism does not happen in the vacuum; there are many other influencing factors that together mold heroism in a society. According to Malinowski B. (1948), societal institutions aim to satisfy the basic psychological needs of its members. A community is an open system with individual unique needs and challenges. Therefore, communities have unique institutions that address individual unique challenges. These institutions include heroism, law, agriculture, education, security, economy, religion, culture and traditions among other themes in a society. These institutions work dependently. The Kiswahili *Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo* have their own uniqueness in heroic formation. This heroic formation attracted the interest of the researcher, to interrogate comparatively the role of other societal institutions in molding heroism in these *Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo*. The reason for choosing this topic is that the researcher has not come across a study on the role of societal institutions in molding heroism in the Kiswahili *Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa and Fumo Liyongo*. The researcher selected the following institutions for consideration: cultural activities, economy, conflicts and war, family connections and death.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This research employed the reader's response theory. The reader's response theory is a critical framework that emphasizes the active role of readers in the process of interpreting and constructing meanings from literary texts. Developed in the latter half of the 20th century, The reader's 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 a reader and a text, the reader's 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 a 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 argued 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 literarily 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. It answers the question: Why or how is this happening? Qualitative studies are mainly used to investigate social issues, and they enable researchers to come up with solutions or recommendations on how to deal with the disparities observed. This study examined the use of various themes in social contexts to depict heroic traits among characters who are perceived to be heroes in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo*. Using the tenets of reader's response theory, the researcher collected data by use of content analysis. The selected Kiswahili *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* was read in depth. Specific data connected with the objective was documented as guided by the reader's response theory and then cross-examined in a view to prove, if in any way, that the selected themes assisted to arouse 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 epic.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Death

According Raglan (1979), the birth and death of a hero is spiritually foreseen in some supernatural manifestations. Raglan says when a hero character is born or dies in a unique context, it is an indication of some supernatural powers in the character. This statement was echoed by Mahenge (2016), who ruled out that the environment associated with the death of a character foretells heroism in the character mentioned. The research conducted by both Raglan (1975) and Mahenge (2016) supported this theme of death though differently. The writer gave a brief history of Mikidadi. This hero was born in a rich family but lived a poor life. His father, Mr Suwedi, was rich but spent his lifetime travelling and spending his wealth carelessly. At some point, Suwedi disappeared mysteriously and was presumed dead, leaving his wife and Mikidadi in poverty. This was a creation by the writer so that Mikidadi can live a humble life and struggle to attain his heroic status in the community. In verse 13 and 120 of the epic, the writer confirms that indeed Mikidadi was from the rich Arabic background and that his father was merchant Suwedi.

1. Verse 120

*Babaye akamjibu
Huyuno ni Muarabu
Na tena mna nasaba
na jadi yenu ni moya.*

2. Verse 13

*Suwedi ali tajiri
ali na mali kathiri
ali mwingi wa safari
Mali akajitumia*

This confirmation was when Mikidadi presumed a poor man from a single family won a court fight against Mayasa. Mayasa was a daughter of Mr. Jabiri who was rich and wanted his daughter married to a rich Arab king, Maliki bin Riyahi. Mayasa had declared to her father that she would only be married to a man who could subdue her in physical battle. Already she had



fought with many suitors. She killed them and a few ran away. These suitors were rich and had enough experience in the battlefield unlike Mikidadi. Mikidadi was poor and had no military gear and knowledge. After Mikidadi won the fight against Mayasa, a problem emerged. Mayasa's father did not accept the wish of his daughter wholeheartedly but instead chose to be tricky in order not to offend his daughter. He demanded a huge dowry from Mikidadi. Jabiri was sure Mikidadi could not afford the dowry in the first place. His father died without leaving any inheritance for him, not even a wife. This is confirmed in verse 15 of the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*.

3. Verse 15

Urathi wa baba yake

Mikidadi asishike

hakuwa hata na mke

kwa unyong e kumngia.

This gave the reader a chance to learn more of Mikidadi's heroic traits. Mikidadi had to go about snatching desert travelers' wealth. In the desert, he confronted many of the travelers of rich kingdoms like the Northern kingdom of Kasiri led by King Kisiri. He killed many soldiers in the battle grounds and held others captive. This gave the researcher a chance to learn the heroic powers Mikidadi had. This can be confirmed from different verses like 379, 414, 176, 181, 612 and others. In page 89, Mayasa, who was very good at warfare, had to confirm that Mikidadi was either a war angel or devil. This was after she witnessed how he tactfully attached and subdued his opponents in the heroic engagement fight.

Luhani was one of the strong kings confronted by Mikidadi in the desert. Luhani confirmed that Mikidadi had killed many of his royal fellows in a war. He told Mikidadi to the face that he had caused a lot tension and deaths amongst his friends. He even listed the people who lost lives in the hands of Mikidadi. He condemned Mikidadi for killing and snatching people's wealth just because he wished to marry Mayasa.

4. Verse 228

Ukasiri ua watu

Masultani wenzetu

Kwa ndoa isiyo kitu

Hutamanije kuoa.

Death reached its climax in verses 750 and 751, when Maliki bin Riyahi, who was at the center of the marriage conflict, was killed. Maliki bin Riyahi was the most favoured suitor by Mayasa's father. Jabiri colluded with him to give Mikidadi beer and arrest him while drunk. Maliki's soldiers drugged and jailed Mikidadi in Maliki's kingdom. Just a few minutes to killing him, Prophet Ali came in handy and rescued Mikidadi. They arrested Maliki and Mikidadi cut his head off. This was heroic. Killing such a strong leader gave Mikidadi a lot respect as a hero in the epic.



5. Verse 750

Alii akamkamata

Maliki akampata

na kumfunga kifyata

kisa akamtukuwa

6. Verse 751

Akampa Mikidadi

na maguuni kuyudi

kumtinda asibudi

kamkata saa moya

Because of this theme of death, the researcher was able to confirm that heroic tendencies were built through death. Heroes could kill to prove their unique strength or, through the death of a close family member, struggle to assert heroism on themselves to avoid weaknesses.

The writer of the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo* also used the theme of death to depict heroism. As earlier indicated by Raglan (1979), the birth and death of a hero is spiritually seen and it is very magical. The writer has not said much about the birth of Fumo Liyongo, but he tells us about family conflict because of inheritance of leadership between Fumo Liyongo and his step brother, King Daudi Mringwari. What the writer has clearly shown is the secret of his death. King Daudi Mringwari feared his brother. He thought that he might end up snatching the kingship from him, and therefore planned death for Fumo Liyongo. He tried many tricks to eliminate him, but Fumo Liyongo had magical powers to unearth any plans against him. Therefore, the king opted to try and use the son of Fumo Liyongo so that he could be able to eliminate Fumo Liyongo. He eventually succeeded in knowing the deep secret about what could be done to kill Fumo Liyongo. He used his son to find out from his father in order to be able to kill him. This is well explained in Verses 143, 144 and 152 below.

7. Verse 143

Nisikiya wangu baba

Limiuwalo ni haba

Ni msumari wa shaba

Kitovuni nikitiya.

8. Verse 144

Jamii silaha piya

haziniuwi swabiya

ila nimezokwambiya

Ni ya kweli yote piya

9. Verse 152

Kitu kiuwacho baba

ni msumari wa shaba

menambiya ni akiba

ya hatari kucheleva

This theme shows how Fumo Liyongo had true love for his son, such that he could risk telling him the secret of his death. He shared that only a steel nail sunk into his empirical cord could



kill him but not any other weapon. Through his death, the readers could be able to see how the community loved and cherished Fumo Liyongo as their leader. Fumo Liyongo never took preventive measures because of his heroic trait; instead, he openly told his son the deep secret. It should be remembered that Fumo Liyongo had already suspected that somebody wanted to use his son to kill him, but he heroically ignored it.

This death secret was then revealed to King Daudi Mringwari who used it to accomplish his mission of killing Fumo Liyongo. This is well illustrated in verse 204 and 205 below. This unique death symbolizes that Fumo Liyongo was a hero because only heroes have magical births and deaths, as explained earlier.

10. Verse 204

Ametiwa kitovuni

Shaba sindano yuwani

Wakamtia muini

Akazikwa kwa umoya.

11. Verse 205

Habari ikaeneya

Pate ikasikiliya

Mfalme kitaiwa

furaha zikamweneya.

Comparatively, both Mikidadi and Fumo Liyongo had a common feature regarding the death of their fathers. Mikidadi lost his father miraculously and therefore he inherited nothing other than poverty, same with Fumo Liyongo who did not inherit either property or leadership from his late father. Both fathers were great people in the society because the writer says Mr Suweri who was the father to Mikidadi was rich, but he loved trips. He died without a trace in one of these trips. King Fumo was the father to Fumo Liyongo and King Daudi Mringwari. After his death, only King Daudi Mringwari had an inheritance. Both Mikidadi and Mayasa were determined to change their destiny. Mikidadi was able to heroically change his life but Fumo Liyongo was killed. Therefore death was a significant feature to tell the reader the characters' history.

Economy

The writer of the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* used the institution of economy to show segregation through economic imbalances in the communities. The father to Mayasa wanted a rich and reputable person to marry his daughter. Most suitors who had interest in marrying Mayasa were wealthy Arabs. Although, ironically, Mayasa did not want somebody to marry her on the grounds of riches, but by beating her in a fierce courtship fight.

12. Verse 71

Na Mayasa hakukiri

kuolewa na tajiri

Illa mshika khanjari

kishujaa kumwelea



The writer created a unique approach so that Mikidadi can prove to be a hero among the suitors. Mikidadi was just a herder with no warfare gears nor dowry to marry with. He only trusted in a heroic tendency. The writer in Verse 75 gives Mikidadi a sad moment by telling him to the face not to engage in the Mayasa marriage competition since he was poor and could not afford a dowry for her.

13. Verse 75

Kaifa wewe fakiri

Wewe mtinga bairi

Wala huna tadbiri

ya mke kumtumia.

Poverty was evident in the life of Mikidadi because he never inherited anything from his late father. This was a very low economic background for a young man to pick from. The writer wanted to show the true picture of Mikidadi's background and how he would rise above it to marry a beautiful lady who had attracted very reputable suitors.

14. Verse 15

Urathi wa baba yake

Mikidadi asishike

Hakuwa hata na mke

Kwa unyonge kumngia

After winning the marriage ticket, he had to jump the hardest hurdle of paying a dowry. His father-in-law had crafted a way to block him from marrying Mayasa in favour of Maliki who was rich. Mikidadi was given three months to pay a huge dowry or else lose the marriage with Mayasa. Mikidadi surprised everyone through his heroic activities of snatching travelers' wealth forcefully. This was heroic because he fought and killed many soldiers and leaders to accumulate such a huge wealth within three months. He disrupted the normal business life in the desert route to get dowry.

15. Verse 284

Ndia haipishi tena

Ndiani mna kijana

Apitae kimuona

Mali yake aitwaa.

16. Verse 285

Ameziwia bara

Haipiti biashara

Sultani wa Kisira

Ghadhabu zikamwingia

In the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, the writer has depicted Fumo as a poor hero. Not much has been said about his nuclear family. His mother was not rich but she was able to be there for his hero son. As said earlier, Fumo Liyongo was sidelined by his step brother. The writer depicts him as a person who is using his heroic nature to survive between Pate and neighboring



communities like Gala. He is depicted as a smart gatherer not like the lavish step brother, King Daudi Mringwari. The economy of Fumo Liyongo can be predicted by the way the writer describes him in Verses 57, 65 and 66. Fumo Liyongo joined the Sanye men in gathering fruits communally. This means he was as poor as his villagers. This happened when Fumo Liyongo ran away to protect himself against his step brother who wanted to kill him. These verses show that Fumo Liyongo was living a poor life.

17. Verse 57

Kikowa tule makoma

Kukuta hatutokoma

Kula tukiitererema

Kulla mtu siku moya.

18. Verse 65

Akawambia "Ngojani"

akatowa mkobani

chembe katia ngweni

Makoma kiwanguliya.

Culture

The *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* is centered around many themes. All these themes target the building of heroism in the epic. These are independent institutions but they work seamlessly. Culture is very key in these institutions. In African context, paying dowry is the climax of acceptance as a couple in this institution. The *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* has culture as the epicenter of heroism. Key characters want to marry but using a different setting of marriage. Mayasa told his father that she could only be married by a strong heroic man who must defeat her in a fierce battle. This was a unique condition that was against the wish of her father who was seeking a wealthy suitor.

On the other hand, all the wealthy suitors were beaten and some killed by Mayasa. Mikidadi took Mayasa down in a fight, and that means Mayasa had to honour her promise and accept him as her husband against the wish of her father. The culture allows fathers to demand the dowry that they wish for their daughters to get married. They also give an acceptance marriage ring to the husband-to-be. This shows that the lady is now married only awaiting some ceremony to be conducted. This was a chance for Jabiri, who was Mayasa's father, to discredit Mikidadi. He was sure that by hiking the dowry, Mikidadi would not be able to pay. This would give him a chance to marry off his daughter to his most favored suitor, Maliki bin Riyahi. The writer confirms the greedy behavior of Jabiri in verses 146-150. Mayasa's father consulted his kins and they agreed to push Mikidadi away by demanding him to pay a huge dowry as follows: He was to bring four hundred camels, one hundred black horses, lots of gold, clothes and more other things. The writer uses culture to depict heroism in Mikidadi by having him accept everything without any objection in verse 153. Mikidadi swore to marry Mayasa by all means so that the opponent doesn't marry her in verse 156.

19. Verse 147

Kwanza nataka

Ngamia

Wema walioletea

20. Verse 150

Tena ulete farasi

mia walio weusi

ni mahari ya Mayasa



Watimu arubamia

na Khamsini jaria

Wote wasio na tuwa

21. Verse 153

22. Verse 156

Mikidadi katamuka

Tafanya juhudi yangu

Jabiri sifanye shaka

hata awe mke wangu

kila ambalo naliona

haolewi na mwenzangu

kwangu nalihitajia

illa mimi kumuoa

This was a direct oppression by Jabiri and, therefore, Mikidadi had no option other than using his heroism to get the dowry. He declared this in Verse 160.

23. Verse 160

Nishikapo upanga

dunia yote hitanga

mali yote tayatunga

haibudi kutimia

This institution of culture forced Mikidadi to snatch and kill without fear to get the dowry. Word went around the users of the desert route that there was a strong Swahili young man stealing and killing people so that he can get a dowry for marriage. Some leaders offered help while others staged war against him. In Verse 61-62, king Kisiri sent his troops to go and kill him in the desert but, instead, Mikidadi killed all of them. He was then invited by the king and given lots of wealth for his marriage.

24. Verse 61

25. Verse 62

Mle katika biladi

Ali kijana fakiri

Mna kijana waladi

Na tena ali swaghiri

Isimuye Mikidadi

Ali mtunga bairi

Na babae meifia.

mbuzi ng'ombe na ngami

The *Epic of Fumo Liyongo* uses the theme of culture to depict heroism. Although the research clearly shows that the institution of marriage was different in the two epics, the research notices that marriage institution was important for continuity of heroism. Unlike in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* where dowry caused heroic conflicts, the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo* illustrated marriage in a different way. Fumo Liyongo got married to a Gala lady without any engagement. The Gala people only requested the king to allow them to marry off their daughter to Fumo Liyongo. The intention was for the Gala people to get a child like Fumo Liyongo. It is ironic that this child was used to kill Fumo Liyongo later. No dowry was mentioned anywhere in the epic. This is explained well in Verse 40 up to 48 of the epic.



26. Verse 40

*Wagala wakabaini**Kumwambia Sulutwani**“Twamtaka kwa thamani**Kijana kutuwelelya.*

27 Verse 41

*“ Twaitaka mbeu yake**nasi kwetu tuipeleke**kwa furaha tumuweke**Apate kutuzaliya.*

Comparatively, the theme of culture and specifically marriage was handled differently to show heroism in the two epics. In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the writer uses marriage as the epicenter of conflicts in the epic. Mayasa demanded to be married by a man who was a war hero—somebody who could fight her and win; however, her father preferred her to get married to a rich man like Malik bin Riyahi. She was eventually married by Mikidadi who was hitherto poor. This heightened the heroic conflicts in the epic. In the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, marriage was a deal between the king and the Gala people. The Gala people requested to marry their daughter off to Liyongo so that they could as well get a child like Fumo Liyongo in the community. It was this child who came to end the conflicts of heroism by killing his father. So the theme is developed differently to achieve one goal of depicting heroism in the *Epics of Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo*.

War

The writer of the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* uses war as the hero's symbol of victory. According to Omer-Cooper (1966), conflict and war during the Mfecane war among Bantus in the South African region in the early 19th century caused suffering and displacement of people. The writer claims that as much as the wars brought in new ideas and development in the region, it caused the rise of Shaka Zulu. Shaka Zulu was a hero who fought to protect his community against the aggressors. This research by Omer-Cooper tells us how war raises heroes. Mikidadi became more famous and heroic because of this institution of war. War has been highlighted in many verses like 57, 58, 86, 87, 88, 58, 90, 279, 329, 330 and others.

28. Verse 57

*Na fumole na upanga**Na ngaoye ya kuinga**Utamboni akiringa**Na shairi akitowa*

29. Verse 58

*Kawapigia kelele**Akiweta ndoni mbele**mume wangu anitwale**Nami nipo nangojea*

30. Verse 329

*Aloua siku hiyo**Mashujaa wanenayo**Hisabu nilonayo**Shujaa aruba mia*

31. Verse 330

*Nabaki wasalio**Jamii wakenda mbio**Waama amiri wao**Asirithi kukimbiya*



Mikidadi was a hero because he applied high level standards of warfare than most of his opponents in the whole epic. Therefore, the writer uses his war capabilities to depict heroism among the characters in the book.

The theme of conflict and war was historically developed in the epic of Fumo Liyongo. Nurse (1994) claims that the migration of the Swahili and other Bantus people was mostly caused by the foreigner who came to their region, and also by inter-boundary conflicts amongst the Pate and other neighbors like the Gala people. This conflict messed up the stability of the region and therefore each community needed a hero to deliver them from the savage intruders. The natives moved to parts of Somalia and the River Tana. The writer of the epic of Fumo Liyongo confirms in Verse 9 of the epic that even the Gala people had somebody who they all felt was their hero. The writer in this verse says the Gala were heroes of the bush, a thing that made King Daudi proudly show off by decorating the heroic traits of Fumo Liyongo in Verses 10-16. For example, in Verse 9, the writer says.

32. Verse 9

Wagala hao yuwani

Ni wakuu wa mwituni

Kabila ya sulutwani

Mashujaa wot'e piya.

King Daudi Mringwari answered this in Verse 10 and 12 below:

33. Verse 10

Sulutwani Pate Bwana

Papo naye akanena

Wagala mumemuona

Liyongo Kiwatokeya?

34. Verse 12

Mfalme kawambiya

Wagala kiwasiya

"huwegema watu miya

Wasiweze hukimbiya

Fumo Liyongo was a hero of the Pate people. The Gala people got surprised when Fumo Liyongo appeared before them. This prompted them to ask for a marriage favor from the king. They requested to get a Gala lady for Liyongo, who would bear them a hero child from him.

The theme of war was developed differently in the two epics to show heroism. In the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the heroes were physically seen fighting unlike in the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*. In the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, the writer illustrates the war-like traits of Fumo Liyongo but never portrayed him in a physical fight. Nevertheless, Fumo Liyongo did possess war-like heroic traits to show that he was a warrior. For instance, in Verse 35 below, the writer shows clearly how the Gala people behaved when they saw Fumo Liyongo, calling him a man of war.

35. Verse 35

Ruhu zikenda kishindo

Zimo zao hukoma ondo



Huyo ni bwana wa kondo

Ashindaye jeshi niya.

The theme of war, though developed differently in the two epics, is clearly used to depict heroism in the selected *Epics of Mikidadi* and *Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* in different contexts.

Family Cohesiveness

Scholars Okpewho (1979) and Mulokozi (2002), in their research on universal traits of an African hero, pointed out that epic heroes from Africa have universal traits that resemble those of heroes from the rest of the world. Some of the traits are depicted by African epic heroes. One of those traits is that an African hero has to be associated with a group in their community. That group is either a family connection or a professional connection. Mikidadi had a connection with his mother and two uncles. Through this attachment, the writer builds the future of Mikidadi as a hero. His mother doubted his son's ability to fight and marry Mayasa, because she felt he was just a poor boy who had no war abilities to compete for Mayasa, as compared with the rich and strong Arabs.

36. Verse 73

Mamaye akamrudi

usiseme Mikidadi

tazama wale juhudi

na mali walotukuwa

37. Verse 75

Kaifa wewe fakiri

wewe mtunga bairi

wala huna tadbiri

ya mke kumtumia

In Verse 82, his uncle could not trust Mikidadi either. When Mikidadi borrowed a war horse and war gear, Turadi confessed that Mikidadi was inexperienced and would lose in the fight badly. He although gave out the horse and war gear to Mikidadi, who proved a hero afterwards. He killed so many of the suitors who came for the competition and equally beat Mayasa in a fiercely contested fight.

38. Verse 82

Mjombawe akanena

Hutoweza kupigana

Kwani ungali kijana

Vita havitakwelea.

Because of the family connection, Mikidadi borrowed a horse and war gear which he used to manifest heroism. His mother came to his rescue when he was held captive by Maliki bin Riyahi. Timami took the message of repentance from Mikidadi to the high Muslim priest who prayed for him to Mohamed. Through the prayer and confession, Ali, a chosen holy soldier of Mohamed, together with Timami, went straight to Maliki bin Riyahi and rescued Mikidadi. Mikidadi was to be slaughtered that morning just a few minutes after they broke the jail and



rescued him. Mikidadi instead cut off Maliki's head and reunited with his wife, Mayasa. The writer narrates the story from page 689 to 772.

39. Verse 711

Ewe Tumwa na

Baini

Mwanangu yukifunguni

na mimimni kilioni

kutwa ni kulia.

40. Verse 752

Kamtinda binafusi

kamkata yake rasi

roho yake kwa upesi

motoni ikenda tiwa.

Mayasa was equally heroic in this *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*. The character had close family ties with his father. Mayasa went against all odds because of the heroism in her. She demanded through her father that she wanted to get married to a war hero—somebody who could beat her in a fight. She defeated all her suitors except Mikidadi. She used her father to communicate with the suitors. Even though her father betrayed her by forcing her to marry Maliki bin Riyahi, she kept close ties with him to the very last moment. The writer makes sure that her heroic traits are seen through her demands through her father.

Her father was at the central point in causing conflicts in the epic. He denied Mikidadi and Mayasa a peaceful marriage by asking for a huge dowry, as explained in the culture aspect of paying dowry above. Through this demand for a huge dowry, Mikidadi had to go in search of the dowry by killing and snatching from travelers in the desert. This depicted Mikidadi's heroic traits. Mayasa was also depicted as a heroine because of all the heroic activities she did to defend her husband. The writer uses this family connection to show us how the family contributed to Mikidadi and Mayasa being the hero and heroine respectively in this epic. This can be seen in Verses 30, 31, 34, 36, 51, 58 and others.

41. Verse 30

Jabiri akawajibu

Nisikizani waarabu

Mwanangu ana aibu

Kwa hayo mlonambia .

42. Verse 31

Alinambia shuruti

mume mtaka binti

akhitarie mauti

ndiyo aliyonambia

Family played a key role in depicting heroism in the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*. This shows the reader the cohesiveness of Fumo Liyongo and his mother. Also, there is a close family member by name Saad. She was a house help in that family. Saad was used to take food to Fumo Liyongo while in the cell. Saad was sent by Fumo Liyongo to convey a sensitive message to Fumo's mother. Fumo Liyongo coined a message in a poem and asked his mother to prepare two loaves of bread—a good one and one that was fermented. He asked his mother to hide a file in the fermented one so that the cell guards would not recognize it. He later used the file to free himself from the cell. Family cohesion as well played a betrayal role. The son of Fumo Liyongo was used by the king to tragically kill his father. The family was central in the conflicts in this epic.



Comparatively, the theme of family cohesion was used to depict heroism differently in the two epics. In *Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the writer depicts the family members of Mayasa as people who were fueling hatred and greediness. This caused Mikidadi to fight back for his marriage rights against the wishes of his father-in-law. The family members of Mikidadi were helpless and depended on hope. They believed since Mikidadi and his mother were poor, they should not allow Mikidadi to marry Mayasa. Mayasa demanded a fight and they believed Mikidadi would not make it. Mikidadi succeeded in beating Mayasa by heroically fighting and winning her wish for marriage. Family was central in the heroic depictions although it was used differently in the two epics.

DISCUSSION

The research found out that heroism in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* was a contribution of a wide range of institutions. Heroism is one of the institutions but it did not work alone but in close seamless cooperation with other institutions. The research found out that culture is a wide spectrum of traditional activities. The research focused more on marriage and, in particular, the culture of paying dowry. It found out that Mayasa's community paid dowry. Jabiri was Mayasa's father; this man was greedy and therefore planned to marry off his daughter to a rich Arab man called Maliki bin Riyahi to get wealthier. The research proved that Jabiri demanded a huge dowry from Mikidadi to halt his bid to marry Mayasa. This prompted Mikidadi to engage in illegal activities of snatching from and killing people to get the dowry. It was through this culture of paying dowry that Mikidadi was tricked into drinking excessive beer which intoxicated him. Malik bin Riyahi jailed him but he was heroically rescued.

Fumo Liyongo, on the other hand, got married to a Gala lady, at the request of the king. The mission of the Gala people was to get a hero with heroic traits like Fumo Liyongo. This child later betrayed his father and eventually killed him.

Death was another institution that made Mikidadi prove himself different from the way his mother and uncles thought of him. He broke the chains of poverty of not inheriting anything from his father who died mysteriously without a trace. So, he proved to many that he was not a lazy man but a hero by using his own hands to kill and rob people to gain the wealth that he felt he deserved so dearly. He killed many soldiers during his mission of getting the dowry by robbing passers-by in the desert. He also killed many suitors, including Sultan Luhan and Malik bin Riyahi.

The research proved that economy was very basic in depicting heroism. The epic had rich people as well as poor people. There was a paradox in this difference. The rich suitors were not heroes because they were beaten by Mayasa; therefore, they fell short of the requirements set by her. Mayasa did not want a husband because of his riches, but his heroic strength that would only be displayed through a fight with her. Mikidadi represented the economically disadvantaged people but he was heroic. He fought with the fellow suitors and killed most of them. He fought with Mayasa, proved stronger than her and won her acceptance for marriage. The research found that heroism is not about wealth but the ability to fight and win, the use of sharp minds and other fearless supernatural ways of doing things unlike other people in the community. The resilience of Mikidadi in pursuing Mayasa for marriage, as well as how he



resisted every attempt to derail his plans of marrying her, proved Mikidadi a hero in this *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*.

The writer uses the economic difference between Mayasa and Mikidadi to prove the heroic traits of Mayasa. Mayasa made it clear to her father and suitors that she would only be married by a hero who could win a fight against her, and not by wealth. That was why she heroically resisted the attempts by his father and Maliki to betray Mikidadi and marry Maliki bin Riyahi. She was from a rich family but honored her promise of getting married to a hero who could subdue her in a physical fight. So, this institution bridged heroism in the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*.

In the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, Liyongo was portrayed as a poor man who was segregated from his extended family. Perhaps it was by spiritual fate that Liyongo did not inherit from his late father who was a king of Pate. So, Fumo Liyongo was economically disadvantaged unlike his brother and that is why the reader is able to note a number of heroic traits to show heroism from the side of Fumo Liyongo. His son was tempted with marrying the daughter of the king and getting wealthier. So, he saw it better to kill his father so that he could get rich unlike his father who was poor. All this was meant to show Fumo Liyongo as a hero and the king and Liyongo's son as villains.

In this research, it is clear that family connection played a huge role in depicting heroism. Mikidadi had close ties with his mother and uncle. His mother was called Tamima and his uncle Turadi. The writer shows us how Mikidadi received immense support from his mother and uncle Turadi. Through this tie, his mother invoked his heroism by telling him the truth about his poor economic and warrior status. She believed that Mikidadi's fate was poverty and that he would not even be able to get married. This was because he never inherited anything from his late father. The research learnt that Mikidadi fought his way out of this situation and, by doing so, displayed heroic traits. His uncle as well did not believe that he stood a chance of winning the fight against Mayasa. He however gave Mikidadi his war gear and horse which helped him fight and emerge a hero. All heroic activities in his life were built from the support he got from his uncle and mother.

The same institution of family connection helped Mayasa showcase heroism. Her father supported her dream of getting married to a hero. Indirectly, the writer uses this relationship to depict betrayal and the segregation of Mikidadi. Mayasa displayed heroism by sticking to her promise, and, by that, Mikidadi maintained the dream of marrying Mayasa even though he had poor support from his father-in-law. All the conflicts in the epic were orchestrated by Jabiri, who never wished to marry off Mayasa to Mikidadi because he was poor; instead, he preferred the rich Maliki Bin Riyahi to marry his daughter.

Unlike the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa*, in the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo*, family members contributed both positively and negatively toward the hero formation of Fumo Liyongo. Saad and the mother of Fumo Liyongo fulfilled the request of Fumo Liyongo by delivering a file to the cell. Fumo Liyongo used it to cut off the chains and set himself free. The son of Fumo Liyongo was used to betray his father and kill him. He was a villain just like the king who was his uncle. The writer successfully uses family cohesion to show us how the heroic traits were built in different contexts in the different epics.



CONCLUSION

The research concluded that the *Epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* and the *Epic of Fumo Liyongo* employed themes in depicting Mikidadi and Fumo Liyongo as heroes and Mayasa as a heroine. The writer clearly gives evidence in many verses, as indicated in the data collected, to show how heroic traits were aroused in various contexts because of specific themes in the epics. The themes of war, economy, family cohesiveness, death and culture among others in the epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Fumo Liyongo* played a key role in showcasing heroic traits among the characters perceived to be heroes in the epic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that future researchers use this research as a basis for studying the modern concept of heroism with an inclination towards societal institutions. It is suggested that this result be used in educational institutions, in particular, by literature scholars and other parties interested in the topic of heroism.

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