



## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN EPIC HERO TRAIT DEPICTIONS IN THE *EPICS OF FUMO LIYONGO, MIKIDADI NA MAYASA AND SWIFA YA NGUVUMALI*.

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source are credited.

**ABSTRACT:** *This research was a comparative study on the depiction of heroism in selected Kiswahili epics of Fumo Liyongo, Mikidadi na Mayasa and Swifa ya Nguvumali. The objective of the research was to comparatively identify heroes and heroines according to universal traits of African heroes in the selected Kiswahili epics. The choice of the research topic was informed by the existing academic gap. Even though much research have been done on heroism, the researcher is yet to encounter a research work on the comparative analysis in depicting heroism in selected Kiswahili epics of epic of Fumo Liyongo, the epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa and the epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali. This research was guided by mythology theory by Rank (1909) and Raglan (1936), and later expounded by Okpewho (1979) and Mulokozi (2002). This theory has identified and listed specific traits that an African epic hero or heroine should be depicted with. This research was library based. Different libraries including e-library were used. The research target population was Kiswahili epics, and it purposefully sampled three Kiswahili epics. The selected epics were; epic of Fumo Liyongo, (Kijumwa, 1913) epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa (Bashir 1972), and epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali, (Ismaili 1968). Data was collected by use of content analysis. The selected Kiswahili epics were read in depth. Specific data connected with the objectives was documented as guided by the three theories and then cross-checked in a comparative way. Data was then analyzed descriptively, and results were presented in a written document. The research identified heroes and heroines as guided by universal traits of an African epic hero in the selected Kiswahili epics. The research concluded that not all heroes and heroines have all the universal African hero traits in the selected Kiswahili epics. The results of the research are expected to be an important source of reference to scholars on the topic of heroism in Kiswahili epics. This research is a bridge to future research and an important addition to research already done on heroism in Kiswahili epics.*

**KEYWORDS:** Kinship, Cohesion, Traits, African epic hero.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This section reviewed past research concerning the concept of heroism in societies. This literature review specifically read documents concerning heroes across the world and how they are either related or different from the researchers' research on the epics of *Fumo Liyongo* (Kijumwa, 1913), *Mikidadi and Mayasa* (Bashir, 1972) and *Swifa ya Nguvumali* (Ismail, 1968).

The literature review was anchored on the objective of the research. The researcher reviewed past research on heroism in communities.

### Literature review focusing on heroes in a community

Johnson (1978) claims that supernatural powers exhibited by heroes, is a basis of sealing the fate of heroism. This indicates the importance of magic in displaying the fate of a hero, even though fate is among the key indicators of heroism. Based on this logic, the views of Johnson (1978) enabled the researcher to identify the supernatural powers, as traits depicted by African epic heroes. Johnson's research aimed at showing characteristics of supernatural powers in a different research from the epic of *Fumo Liyongo* (Kijumwa, 1913), *the epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa* (Bashir, 1972) and the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali*. (Ismail, 1968). Regardless of this, Johnson's research was crucial because supernatural powers were a pillar in identifying an African epic hero in the selected Kiswahili epics.

Kemunto (2015) did a comparative analysis of hero traits in the epics of Fumo Liyongo, and Kivuli cha Sakawa (Bitugi, 2010). In this research, he comparatively analyzed the hero characteristics of Fumo Liyongo and Sakawa using classical approach. The results of the research confirmed that, to some extent, Fumo Liyongo and Sakawa had similar hero traits. The results indicated that, the two heroes were men emanating from specific communities where they were famous and had followers, their life was surrounded with miseries, they at least travelled to specific places with hero missions, they were loved by their communities and died mysteriously. Fumo Liyongo and Sakawa had differences as well. The story about their birth was different, their body physique was different, and also their geographical catchment was different. Sakawa came from the highlands of Gusii in Western Kenya, while Fumo Liyongo came from coastal region of Kenya in East Africa.

### Theoretical framework

This research paper used the theory of Mythology to collect and analyze data.

### Mythology Theory

The theory of mythology is a strand of structuralism that foregrounds African epic hero traits. This theory was founded by Raglan (1936) and Rank (1909). Basically, this theory is anchored on universal epic traits. Otto Rank and Lord Raglan listed all universal traits that epic heroes should portray universally. In general they listed twenty two universal traits for all epic heroes in the world The listed traits are: mother is a royal virgin, father is a king, father often a near relative to mother, unusual conception, hero reputed to be son of god, attempt to kill hero as an infant, often by father or maternal grandfather, hero spirited away as a child, reared by foster parents in a far country, no details of childhood, returns or goes to future kingdom, is victor over king, giant, dragon or wild beast, marries a princess (often daughter of predecessor),



becomes king, for a time he reigns uneventfully, he prescribes laws, later loses favor with gods or his subjects, driven from throne and city, meets with mysterious death, often at the top of a hill, his children, if any, do not succeed him, his body is not buried, has one or more holy sepulchers or tombs.

Re known African scholars like (Okpewho, 1979) and (Mulokozi, 2002), expounded this theory by coming up with an African strand of African epic universal trait. These experts listed five universal traits, that an Africa epic hero should have. These experts claim that, these traits purely depend on a community's culture and traditions, and as well their perspectives on their hero. Therefore, heroes differ because of their community cultures and traditions. Therefore, these listed traits act as tenets of the theory. These tenets are: Heroes or heroines can be descents of royal or normal families, Heroes or heroes live a spiritual and superstitious lives, they are heroic in terms having abnormally excessive powers, high thinking abilities, huge body and others unique traits, and they have a close tie with a group from their communities. These tenets lead the researcher to identify heroes and heroines in the selected Kiswahili epics of *Fumo Liyongo*, *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Swifa ya Nguvumali*. This theory helped the researcher compare and contrast the African traits that depict heroism, and eventually identified heroes and heroines in the selected Kiswahili epics. The researcher analyzed extracts from different contexts from the epics of *Fumo Liyongo*, *Mikidadi and Mayasa* and *Swifa ya Nguvumali*.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher used content analysis in collecting data by reading the *epics of Fumo Liyongo* (Kijumwa, 1913), *Mikidadi and Mayasa* (Bashir, 1972) and *Swifa ya Nguvumali* (Ismael, 1968) and by documenting data related with the objective. The researcher was guided by the tenets of the theory of Mythology, where the underlined traits of an African epic hero were used to indicate whether the heroes were depicted with the same or not. The researcher comparatively analyzed the data if it was similar or different among the said heroes using a check list tool. Environmental factors like culture, geography and history were basic in identifying the heroes in their hero contexts. Every epic was read separately from the other, and later comparisons made. Data was recorded by both hard and soft copies. According to Buliba (2014) data can be analyzed quantitatively or qualitatively, depending on the data collected and type of research conducted. This research was aimed at descriptively establishing hero depictions, in the selected epics of *Fumo Liyongo* (Kijumwa, 1913), *Mikidadi and Mayasa* (Bashir, 1972) and *Swifa ya Nguvumali* (Ismail, 1968). Therefore, the data and results of this specific research were qualitative.

## Data analysis and research findings

Data concerning the hero depicted in this research were collected from different contexts, as used in the selected Kiswahili epics. The epic contexts were from different environments varying from culture, environment and history of the character in the epic of *Fumo Liyongo*, *Mikidadi and Mayasa*, and *Swifa ya Nguvumali*.



## Identifying heroes using the Principles of African epic hero universal traits in the epics

### *Fumo Liyongo, Mikidadi na Mayasa, and Swifa ya Nguvumali.*

Renowned scholars from the West, like Ruth Finnegan (1970) and Bowra (1964), have constantly denied the existence of African epics. Bowra claimed that major characters believed to be heroes are only primitive, witches and sorcerers in the African communities. The researcher quotes the scholar in one of his publications, “*Heroism and the Supernatural in Africa*” “The writer says that *the primitive and savage culture of Africa are characterized by magic*. This is a negative attitude and view by the western world intended to underrate African epic heroes. As a counter defense, Okpewho (1979) and other African scholars decided to prove to the world that, Africa epics had heroes. Mulokozi (1996) has elaborated that heroes in the Kiswahili epics are of three types. We have religious, historical and created heroes. The epic of *Fumo Liyongo* has Fumo Liyongo as an example of a historical hero. The second type of hero is religious heroes like Prophet Muhammad in the epic of *Ras Ighuli*, and lastly Created heroes like the rich man in the epic of *Masahibu* and Nguvumali in the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali*.

This research paper used specific hero traits to depict African epic heroes. These are the tenets that were used in this research to establish who an African epic hero is, in the selected Kiswahili epics of *Mikidadi and Mayasa*, *Fumo Liyongo* and *Swifa ya Nguvumali*. The hero characters in the selected epics were portrayed differently in different contexts, making the researcher want to determine if the perceived characters were indeed heroes or not. The researcher made conclusions based on the evidence from the epics of whether the perceived characters were epic heroes or not, following the traits proposed by Okpewho (1979). The researcher listed the traits as follows: A hero can be of high social class or an ordinary class, he/she is powerful and uses high thinking abilities, uses spiritual powers, and has a strong community bond, followers from his catchment in the community.

### **A hero comes from a high or ordinary social class in a community.**

Following the theory of mythology, an epic hero can emerge from either a high or an ordinary social class in a community. In the epic of *Fumo Liyongo*, the researcher identified Fumo Liyongo as the hero in different contexts because he has unique traits from the rest of the members of his community. Scholars like Freeman-Grenville (1962) say that the leader of Ozi was called Fumo Liyongo, and he lived in the Kingdom of Pate. The earlier scholars, like Raglan (1936), argued that the father of a hero is a king or at least a leader of a particular community. His kinship was anointed by God, and therefore, it was the responsibility of community members to accept and obey that leadership. Once the King dies under any circumstance, one of his kinsmen inherits the kingship immediately. At times, conflicts arose between the sons of the king. This is the conflict that caused mistrust between Fumo Liyongo and his sibling King Daudi Mringwari in the epic of *Fumo Liyongo*.

Fumo Liyongo was from the Al-Bauri kinship (Allen, 1993). This kinship was anointed, and therefore, they produced kings who led the Swahili people of Pate. The father to Fumo Liyongo was called Mringwari, and he was the king of Pate. When he died, Daudi took over the kingship under some unclear circumstances following their culture. This did not work well with Fumo Liyongo, who was believed to be the next king after the death of his father. The writer confirms that Fumo Liyongo and his mother had to relocate from Pate because of the tension between Daudi Mringwari and his brother, Fumo Liyongo. She suspected that the king might harm or even kill Fumo Liyongo. This ironically placed Fumo Liyongo in an ordinary social class. The



writer must have done it strategically to escalate the conflict between King Daudi Mringwari and his brother Fumo Liyongo.

The writer clearly indicates that King Daudi Mringwari feared Fumo Liyongo because he thought Fumo Liyongo might snatch his kingship, and therefore, Daudi Mringwari planned to eliminate him, as evidenced by the writer in verse 93 in the epic of Fumo Liyongo. Check it in verse 93 below.

#### 1. Verse 93

*'Anipoke ufalume*

*Kisa chanda nikiuma*

*Kheri yangu nikiume*

*Kheri yangu mwanamume.*

This incident was important because it clearly showed the researcher why Fumo Liyongo was portrayed as a struggling, poor hero. The writer developed the heroic tendencies of Fumo Liyongo by having him in the lower cadre of the community, so that he can fight for his rights against the privileged King Daudi Mringwari. When the researcher comparatively analysed Fumo Liyongo and King Daudi Mringwari, he concluded that the heroic traits of Fumo Liyongo were developed better as an ordinary social class person than it was to be as a high social class person. This is because he was oppressed as an ordinary social class person by his brother King Daudi Mringwari.

#### **Social class in Epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa**

In the Kiswahili epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa, the researcher was able to identify Mikidadi and Mayasa as African heroes and heroines, respectively, following the specific African hero traits.

#### **Mikidadi**

When the researcher considered the aspect of social class as an identity of an African hero, he realised that Mikidadi was actually from a royal background but because of supernatural powers, his father died before inheriting any property. He therefore ended up living a poor and miserable life as a herder for his uncle, Mr Turadi, as explained by his mother in verse 73 of the epic.

#### 2. verse 73

*Kaifa wewe fakiri*

*Wewe mtuna bairi*

*Wala tabdiri*

*ya mke kutumia.*





His father, Mr Zuwedi, loved taking trips, and it was during one of these trips that he vanished without a trace, leaving his wife and son to live a poor life. In verse 259 below, the writer hints to the reader how wealthy Mr Zuwedi was.

### 3. Verse 259

*Alikufa baba yangu,  
Nami nisipate fungu,  
Nimekaa peke yangu,  
Sina kitu kutumia.*

Verses 13 and 15 explain how Zuwedi used his wealth to move around on his endless trips. It was one of these journeys that he disappeared without a trace.

### 4. verse 13.

*Suwedi ali Tajiri  
Ali mali na kathiri  
Ali mwingi wa safari  
mali akajitumia.*

### 5. verse 15.

*Urathi wa baba yake  
Mikidadi asishike  
hakuwa hata na mke  
Kwa unyonge kumwingia.*

As proof that Zuwedi indeed was from a rich background, the writer in verse 120 of the epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa confirms that Zuwedi was a brother to Mayasa's father, who was very rich. This confirms that Mikidadi was from a royal kinship. Verse 120 below explains this relationship between Mikidadi's father and Jabiri, who was Mayasa's father.

### 4. Ubeti wa 120.

### 6. Verse 120

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

## Mayasa

Mayasa was a heroine in the epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa. This character was the daughter of Jabiri, who was very rich. The father was from an Arabic kinship. Mayasa stirred all conflicts in the epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa. She refused to be married by even the rich Arab suitors but gave a tough courtship condition. Any man who wanted to marry her was to face a fierce physical fight. She proved strong and defeated all suitors except Mikidadi. Jabiri, who was Mayasa's father, never wanted Mikidadi to marry his daughter because Mikidadi was poor. He



preferred Mayasa to be married by Sultan Malik Bin Riyahi. Malik Bin Riyahi was rich but never won a fight with Mayasa; therefore, he failed to grab a marriage ticket as per the demands of Mayasa. In verse 31 of the epic, the writers write this demand made by Mayasa to his father. She never considered wealth and title as an aspect of her marriage, but whoever was to win a fight against her was to be her husband.

#### 7. verse 31

*Alinambia shuruti*

*Mume mtaka binti*

*Akhitarie mauti*

*ndiyo aliyonambia.*

Most important is the fact that Mayasa wasn't just an ordinary woman, but a daughter of a rich, renowned person in that community. Her unique approach of marriage courtship was a recipe of hero trait depictions of other characters, like Mikidadi, who was from a poor background.

#### **Social class in the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali***

The epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali* explains incidents of witchcraft and sorcerers in Kilwa. Salima was killed by these sorcerers, prompting the government to intervene by calling their known medicine man by name, Nguvumali, so that he could catch the witchcraft. In the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali*, the character Nguvumali is not real as such, but he is a replica of a historical medicine man by that name in Kilwa. The historical medicine man was famous and was from the Matumbi community. Lienhardt (1968) confirms that the historical medicine man was trained to be a magician by another famous magician called Hamed Matoroka from the Ngindo community. This historical Nguvumali helped people a lot in catching wizards and sorcerers in their larger community. In verse 373 of the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali*, the writer has explained the kinship of this medicine man who used magical powers to reign during his time.

#### 8. Verse 373

*Anasema Bwana Shambi*

*'Nguvumali mmatumbi*

*Kujakunipaka vumbi*

*Jambo lasilotumia.*

#### **Extraordinary human characteristics in the epic of *Fumo Liyongo***

Mdee, Njogu, and Shaffi (2013) in *Kamusi ya Karne ya 21* (2013) have described this behaviour in two ways. The first fashion depicts a curse, and the second one portrays heroic traits. The extraordinary human traits discussed here are heroic traits, not curses. The *epic of Fumo Liyongo* is centred around two brothers. King Daudi Mringwari and Fumo Liyongo were stepbrothers. When their father died, the two started fighting over the inheritance. Fumo



Liyongo was depicted as a hero because of the many extraordinary human traits he was depicted with.

Fumo Liyongo was depicted as a scaring person. This trait made people see him as awful. The writer described him as a person who was very huge and masculine. Some of this traits are well elaborated in verses 7 to 34. Follow the explanations in the verse below.

9. verse 7.

*Kimo kawa mtukufu*

*Mpana sana mrefu*

*Majimboni yu maarufu*

*Watu huya kwangaliya.*

Fumo Liyongo was huge with strong muscles such that, when the Gala people came to witness how peculiar he was, they got so scared until they peed uncontrollably as explained in verse 14 below.

14. verse 14

*Ghafla kikutokeya*

*Mkoyo hukupoteya*

*Tapo likakuwiliya*

*Ukapata kuliya*

In verse 27 of the epic, the writer says that Liyongo blew three trumpets and busted them one after another. In verse 25, the writer tells us that Fumo Liyongo would travel day and night without a stopover. Fumo Liyongo could take only two days from Shaka to Pate, a journey that takes four days under normal circumstances. These plus other traits in other contexts proved Fumo Liyongo's uniqueness and therefore a hero in Pate.

15. verse 27

*Liyongo kenda muini*

*Akipata mlangoni*

*Panda katia kanwani*

*Kivuzia kapasuya.*

16. verse 25

*Na mtu kitoka Shaka,*

*Siku nne kwa haraka*

*Siku nne kwa haraka*

*alo hodari sikiya .*

These hero traits inspired the Gala people such that, they requested king Daudi Mringwari to allow them marry off their Gala daughter to Fumo Liyongo. They did that with the hope that, Fumo Liyongo will sire a hero like him for the Gala people. This is explained in verse 40 and 41 below





17. verse 40

*Wagala wakabaini**Kumwambia Sulutwani**' Twamtaka kwa thamani**Kijana kutuleya.*

18. verse 41

*"Twaitaka mbeu yake**nasi kwetu tuipeke**kwa furaha tumuweke**apate kutuzaliya."*

Fumo Liyongo portrayed a unique hero characteristic of being a super thinker. He realized that king Daudi had colluded with the Sanye people to eliminate him while harvesting fruits in the forest. The Sanye people wanted to shoot down Fumo Liyongo while harvesting palm fruits from the tall palm trees. In verses 59 to 66, the Sanye planned on how to kill Fumo Liyongo but they got frustrated when Fumo Liyongo dismantled that plan. He asked them to choose one of the tallest palm trees, then using a single arrow, he shot down several fruits from the tree without necessarily climbing it. This is explained in verse 59, 65 and 66 below.

23. verse 59

*Na wao maana yao**siku yeye apandao**wamfume wut'e piya**zembe kwa wao umoya.*

24. verse 65

*Akawambia "Ngojani"**akatowa mkobani**chembe katia ngweni**Makoma kiwaunguliya*

25. Ubeti wa 66

*Achangusha ngaa ndima**ni mangi mno makoma**kwa wut'e wakaatama**ajabu zikawangiya.*

These extraordinary traits made the researcher identify Fumo Liyongo famous and a hero in the community.

### **Extraordinary Human Traits in the Epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa***

The *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa* is a story of Mikidadi and Mayasa. The two characters were hero and heroine respectively. Mayasa declared that whoever wanted to marry her was to fight physically with her and win. She was able to fight and beat many of the men who came to front their interest in her marriage. Most of these men were rich and famous but were not heroes like Mikidadi. Mikidadi fought with Mayasa and beat her and therefore won the ticket of marrying Mayasa. This incident was a good recipe of showing the heroic, extraordinary traits of Mikidadi and Mayasa. Therefore this paper identifies Mikidadi and Mayasa as African heroes according to this tenet.



## Mikidadi

In verses 183 -241 of the epic of *Mikidadi and Mayasa*, the writer depicts Mikidadi as an extraordinary human being. He showed magical powers even when fighting with strong and well-trained armies like that of King Luhani. The writer narrates on how Mikidadi used his unique traits to rescue Kesi and Anasa who were abducted by Luhani. Luhani had abducted Kesi alongside his wife by name Anasa with an intention of killing Kesi and eloping Anasa to be his wife. Mikidadi killed Luhani and most of his Soldiers. He also roped them the wealth they were carrying. The story is narrated in verses 234 to 238 in the epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa* below.

26. verse 234

*Pakazuka na kitali*

*kulemeana wawili*

*kisionekane kivuli*

*mtana ukapotea.*

27. verse 238

*Akamkata na rasu*

*kwa mkonowe na kisu*

*akamuekea kesu*

*mbeleye kamuekea*

Mikidadi sustained his military abilities throughout the epic. He was depicted as a strong war like man with high thinking abilities in a number of contexts in the epic. These incidents are narrated well in many verses like: 388, 399, 406, 541-549. In verses 378, 379, 386, 431- 438 and 557- 558.

After successfully winning a battle against the army of Kisiri kingdom, king Kasiri asked Mikidadi to defend himself against a man-eating lion in the palace. The writer tells us that Mikidadi killed the lion that was feared most in verse 456 below.

28. verse 456

*Alipokwisha mkata*

*simba akamkukuta*

*na shairi akaleta*

*kijisifu ushujaa.*

In verse 366, the king of Kisiri is scared after looking at Mikidadi. The writer says the king accepted that indeed Mikidadi was a hero by his physical look. This is narrated in verse 366 below

29. verse 366

*Kamuonake shujai*

*Sultani kafazai*

*roho ikangia mai*

*kwa yakini ni shujaa.*



Mikidadi portrayed fearless traits that convinced the researcher to identify Mikidadi as An African hero. Mikidadi portrayed many other unique traits other than strength to prove that he was a real African epic hero in the rest of the epic.

### **Mayasa**

According to (Johnson, 1986; Mulokozi, 1999 and Gathara, 2015 ) followers of mythology theory tend to believe that all heroes are male. Mayasa like any other female heroine was a unique case. Due to the unique heroic decisions that Mayasa undertook, this paper decided to accord her a hero character even if she was a female. Kazinja, (2017) somehow disapproved the thoughts of the proponents of mythology by supporting that female characters can be heroes as well.

Mayasa was depicted with extraordinary human characteristics which were heroic. Mayasa portrayed fearless traits by declaring a fight against men who were her suitors. This was a unique trait for a woman. Mayasa told his father that whoever wishing to marry her, was first to fight and win her in a physical fight. She then fought fearlessly and killed many of the suitors. Its only Mikidadi that beat her in the courtship fight therefore winning a marriage ticket. She declared this decision before her father in verse 39 below.

29. verse 39

*Mume wangu nitakaye*

*hapa pangu anijiye*

*tupigane mimi naye*

*anishindapo taao.*

In verse 121, Mayasa accepts Mikidadi as her hero that won her marriage acceptance. This was after Mikdadi beat her in a powerful showdown. Verse 121 below narrates how Mayasa concided to Mikdadi's defeat and how she agreed to be married to Mikidadi without considering his social class.

30. Verse 121.

*Mayasa kamba Babangu*

*hata pasiwe na fungu*

*huyu ndiye mume wangu*

*shuruti imetimia.*

It's through this marriage acceptance between Mayasa nad Mikidadi that many conflicts a rose depicting both Mikidadi and Mayasa as heroes and heroine respectfully in the epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa*.



### Extraordinary Human Traits in the Epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali*

The core root of conflicts in *epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali* is on traditional witches. Nguvumali unlike other heroes in the selected epics did not use muscle strength but spiritual strengths. Nguvumali used bride to show how strong he was in verse 339 and 340 below.

31. verse 339

*Kasimama Nguvumari*

*Mwenye sifa na fahari*

*Akamwambia Liwali*

*Na jumbe wake pamoya.*

32. verse 340

*'Ninawapa dawa yangu*

*Natoa kilevi changu*

*Mwisho wa uganga wangu*

*Naona umetimia.*

This paper finds the character uniquely powerful because of his magic. He commands the rest of the witches in verses 377 – 379. He condemns Mr Shambi bin Dima nine months imprisonment. He also condemns five months imprisonment for all women witches in verses 351 and 377 below.

33. verse 351

*'Ninakupa wa (h)ao*

*Mnyamwezi na jaluo*

*Asikali wenye tao*

*Ni watu (h)ao chukua*

34. verse 377

*Jajimenti ikahukumu*

*Wafungwe wote maalum*

*Kuwawacha ni haramu*

*Sharia imeziwia*

The research found out that Nguvumali was unique as compared with the other heroes who used physical strength in the selected Kiswahili epics. He never fought physically but he was scaring and was feared by many because of his magical strength. We were not told much about his body appearance unlike the other heroes in the selected epics. This paper identified him as a hero because he had unique, extraordinary human strengths than the other members of his community.

### Possession of supernatural powers in the epic of *Fumo Liyongo*

Johnson (1986) claims that magic is a basic trait that determines the fate of a hero. This dimension explains how important magic is for a hero even though fate is just one of the factors determining the future of hero. Considering this logic, the researcher was able to identify Fumo Liyongo as a magic hero in a number of contexts in the *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa*.

King Daudi Mringwari was determined to eliminate Fumo Liyongo. He therefore used Fumo Liyongo's son to fulfill this dream. He hatched a plan by deceiving Fumo Liyongo's son that he was to marry his daughter if he managed to know what can be done to kill Fumo Liyongo. Fumo Liyongo used of his magical power, to know that his son was sent to kill him. In verses 135 and 179 of the epic, the writer confirms this allegation.



35. verse 135

*'Kikuuwacho ni n'ni**Nami niyuwe yakini**nina hamu ya moyoni**Atakuweka Jaliya.*

36. verse 143

*'Nisikiya wangu baba**Liniuwalo ni haba**ni msumari wa shaba**Kitovuni kunitiya.*

37. verse 179

*Kamtiya kitovuni**naye ulele kwa t'ani**achamka hamuoni**Kiyana amekimbiya.*

The powers he used were magical but not for ordinary people. It was even more ironical because even after knowing what Fumo Liyongo's son wanted, Fumo Liyongo was equally influenced by the same spirits to reveal the secret to his enemies. King Daudi Mringwari used the secret to eliminate Fumo Liyongo. The researcher found out that, this supernatural influence was necessary so that the hero dies in a unique way. His close kin had to betray him, so that the audience can know that the hero was magical and could only die in a unique way. Magic was central in the life of Fumo Liyongo. Verse 37 of the epic narrates this.

38. verse 37

*Kisa katiti kutuwa**Mkobani akatowa**Zitu alizotukuwa**Nyumba ndima nisikiya.*

This paper was able to notice magic and influence of supernatural powers in other contexts in the *epic of Fumo Liyongo* to prove that Fumo Liyongo had that element of an African hero.

### **Possession of supernatural powers in the epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa***

The epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa* has two characters identified as heroes. Following different contexts, the researcher found out that *Mikidadi* and *Mayasa* portrayed magic powers in their traits.

#### **Mikidadi**

The researcher related closely the social class of *Mikidadi* with supernatural powers. Historically, *Mikidadi*'s family was rich, but by unforeseen powers *Mikidadi* ended up growing as a very poor young man. His father vanished during one of his trips without a trace. It's by



fate that Mikidadi had to live a poor life without any inheritance even from his other relatives. Mikidadi had to come out strong and emerge a hero against all odds. He fought against discrimination because of poverty. He fought and won marriage acceptance from a rich strong woman who had proved untouchable by many men who were not heroes. In verses 13 and 120 of the *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa*, the writer narrates how supernatural powers influenced the life of Mikidadi, because of the disappearance of his father.

39. verse 120

*Babaye akamjibu*

*Huyuno ni Muarabu*

*Na tena mna nasaba*

*na jadi yenu ni moya.*

40. verse 13

*Suwedi ali tajiri*

*ali na mali kathiri*

*ali mwingi wa safari*

*Mali akajitumia*

According to Mahenge (2016), the birth and death of a hero is usually confusing and unique. The birth of Mikidadi was unique because the writer does not show us how it happened. The disappearance of his father is as well very unique. The writer wanted to show the reader how important it was for Mikidadi to work hard as a hero to overcome these challenges.

Mikidadi used magic power when confronting his enemies. In verse 379 and 414 of the epic, the writer tells us how strong and magical Mikidadi's war tactics were. He magically attacked and killed many soldiers at once. These incidents are explained in verse 379 and 414 below

41. verse 379

*Nawatimie elfu*

*mashujaa wa khofu*

*wawezao kita sefu*

*wazoevu wa kitaa.*

42. verse 414

*Mikidadi kawakata*

*asisaze mtu hata*

*hata mwondoka wa vita*

*Sultani katongoa.*

Mikidadi was even able to use supernatural power to attack evil spirits like in verses 176 and 181.

43.verse 176

*Akatokewa na jini*

*afriti shaitani*

*moto watoka kinywani*

*asemapo kwa fazaa*

44. verse 181

*Hata akisa kusoma*

*yule jinni kalalama*

*akamba moto wachoma*

*muwili wangu jamia*

This paper found out that Mikidadi possessed and was influenced by magical powers such that even Mayasa herself confused Mikidadi with angels. When Mikidadi was attacking fellow suitors, he used magical powers that made Mayasa think Mikidadi was a spirit of a kind in verse 89 below.





45. verse 89.

*Au yule ni ruhani*

*au ni mwana wa Jini*

*aula ni sheitwani*

*aula ni malakaa*

### **Mayasa**

Mayasa has been identified as a heroine following her unique war styles. This was evident from the way she would attack suiters and kill them. She even staged a furious fight against Mikidadi, and proved strong just like Mikidadi. This was an extraordinary characteristic for a woman. The researcher found out that Mayasa qualified to be a hero because she possessed these extraordinary powers, which were like spiritually driven. Mayasa perplexed Ali who was a spiritual leader of Muhamad. In a contest between Mikidadi and Ali, Mayasa came out strongly and begged Ali not kill Mikidadi. This was a heroic move by Mayasa. Ali was excited because she appreciated Mayasa's heroic courage and forgave Mikidadi as narrated in verse 612 in the epic of *Mikidadi and Mayasa* below.

46. verse 612

*Shiri akisha soma*

*Alii katabasamu*

*akangiwa na huruma*

*Mayasa akamwambia*

Through this heroic act, Mikidadi was converted to Islamic brotherhood. Its Ali that was sent to save Mikidadi from the cells of Malik Bin Riyahi.

### **Possession of supernatural powers in the epic of *Swifa ya Nguvumali***

The *epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali* is spiritually driven. All scenes are spiritually powered. Four sorcerers bewitch a young lady by name Salima and kill her. This act causes an uproar in the city and therefore the leader and the villagers agree to call Nguvumali. Nguvumali was re known medicine man from Kilwa. When Nguvumali arrives, its evident that he was feared and was knowledgeable of these spiritual powers. He prepares a concoction and makes everyone in the town to drink it as narrated in verse 305 below.

47. verse 305

*Ukali akausonga*

*Anashamiri uganga*

*Na dawa zake za unga*

*Ndizo anazotumia.*



The concoction was meant to make the culprits drunk temporary, and by so doing it was to expose their evil deeds to the community.

Mr Shambi Bin Dima pretended not afraid of Nguvumali and therefore endorsed the call of many members of the community to invite Nguvumali to unearth the killers of Salima. In verses 184 and 185 the writer narrates how the scenario was.

74. verse 184

*Bwana Shambi Kalatwili*

*Nakujitia fahari*

*Hapa aje Nguvumali*

*Ndio haswa welekea.*

75. verse 185

*“Nguvumali afike*

*Afanye uganga wake*

*Na kiumbe aoneke*

*Mimi ninahitajia.”*

Mr Shambi bin Dima was the team leader of the sorcerers in question, and therefore he was scared although he pretended not to be. Shambi had a bad dream in which he saw two snakes follow him. He saw a spirit snatch him his spiritual paraphernalia. The writer wanted to foretell that Nguvumali was to snatch Shambi Bin Dima his powers and expose him to people, that he was a sorcerer not a a medicine man as he pretended to be.

These happenings are narrated in verses 209 and 210 below.

76. verses 209

*Alipofika nyumbani*

*Hofu zikaja moyoni*

*Mwanzo kule majiani*

*Kiko ilimtokea*

77. verses 210

*Maona nyoka wawili*

*wanamfata kiviri*

*Dalili ya Nguvumali*

*Ya kuweza kumjia*

Nguvumali was given authority to clean the city by catching all sorcerers in the city. This happened because of his spiritual powers. It had even happened early in the very city as explained in the verses 297 and 303 below.

78. verse 297

*Enzi yake Nguvumali*

*(H)apakuwa tena uswili*

*Mwenyewe bwana Liwali*

*Barua akaitoa*

79. verse 303

*Na wale wakawasili*

*Yule bwana nguvumali*

*Mwenye uganga kamili*

*Na serikali inajua.*

There are many contexts where spiritual matters are show in this epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali. Nguvumali was identified as a hero because of his spiritual powers un like the other heroes from the selected Kiswahili epics. Other verses that depict spiritual powers include 311, 294, 340, 341, 313, 315, 356, 357, and 358



### Family and community cohesion in the *epic of Fumo Liyongo*

According to the theory of mythology, a hero should have a follow up. This can be a follow up from the community or family cohesion. Researchers like (Johnson 1986; Okpewho 1976, Mbele 1986; Mulokozi 1986 and 1999) believe that Kiswahili epics have heroes. Community follow up is very basic as one of the key components of an African epic hero. According to Mulokozi (1999)

The story of Fumo Liyongo has been made in a special way. There is family conflict, betrayal, and cohesion. Through family cohesion, his mother was handy in helping Fumom Liyongo escape jail. Fumo Liyongo created a poem to convey a secret message to his mother. When her mother read the poem, she was able to make bread and place a file in it. Fumo Liyongo used the file to cut chains and set himself free. This was narrated in verses 107 and 116 below.

80. verse 107

*Mkate huu sikiya*

*Pishi mbili hutimiya*

*Kati tupa akatiya*

*Liyongo kampekeya.*

81. verse 116

*Zilipo kikaza kusi*

*alilikata upesi*

*hata zikikoma basi*

*Ikanuka kawambiya.*

Fumo Liyongo had close cohesion with the Sanye people. He worked closely with the Sanye people to collect fruits. The Sanye men wanted to use the relationship to kill Fumo Liyongo but because of his super thinking hero abilities, he disrupted the plans by using his war abilities to shoot down the fruits from the palm trees without climbing. The Sanye people wanted to shoot him down, when he could be at the top of the palm tree.

King Daudi Mringwari tricked Fumo Liyongo to go to the palace with an intention to kill him. He also used Fumo Liyongo's son with an intention to kill Fumo Liyongo. He actually succeeded to kill Fumo Liyongo using Fumo Liyongo's son. It's through family cohesion that Fumo Liyongo was buried by his mother in verses 224-227 of the epic of Fumo Liyongo.. The community members celebrated Fumo Liyongo as their hero. Community follow up was a basic element to indicate an African epic hero.

Just like the other selected epics use community follow up as an element to show that one is an African epic hero. No hero can work in isolation. There must be a connection between the hero and the community.

### Family and community cohesion in the *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa*

The epic of *Mikidadi na Mayasa* is firmly built on the heroes' attachment to family and community cohesion.

#### Mikidadi

Mikidadi had a close cohesion with his mother and uncle Mr Turadi. The two kins formed a powerful background for this hero. Also, Mikidadi got a back up of community cohesion through friends like Khamisi and Ali. Khamisi accompanied him to the desert to rope passers-by and therefore Mikidadi's heroism was developed through that journey. Ali was a spiritual



leader of Prophet Muhamad and therefore assisted to convert Mikidadi to Islam and also played a key role in rescuing Mikidadi from the hands of Malik Bin Riyahi. Mikidadi borrowed a horse and a war gear from his uncle to participate in the fight for Mayasa like the other suiters. In verses 61 -130 in the *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa*, the writer narrates how Mikidadi borrowed a way gear from his uncle because he was so poor o own one like other young men did. For instance, the writer narrates this in verse 8 below.

82. verse 81

*Mjomba nipe farasi*

*unazime na libasi*

*nimtokee Mayasa*

*Nnapenda kumtokea*

### **Mayasa**

Mayasa was a female character who was central in all conflicts of the *epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa*. This paper finds out that Mayasa had close cohesion with father Mr Jabiri. She passed her wishes for marriage through his father. In verse 31, the writer narrates the conflict between Mayasa and her father concerning her marriage. Mayasa made an abnormal demand to his father. She demanded that, whoever wishing to marry her must engage her in a physical fight. It was the view of the researcher that, Mayasa's father wasn't comfortable with this decision because he was expecting dignitaries from Arabic community to come for engagement. When the rich Arab suiters came for Mayasa's engagement, he had no option other than to pass the painful demand as set by his daughter to the honored young men. This happened because of the cohesion Mayasa had with his father. In verse 31 below, Jabiri narrates Mayasa's demands to the Arab suiters.

83. verse 31

*Alinambia shuruti*

*mume mtaka binti*

*akhitarie mauti*

*ndiyo aliyonambia*

Jabiri never conceded to Mayasa's choice to Marry Mikidadi, after Mikidadi won in the courtship physical fight. He therefore planned to make the marriage impossible by demanding huge dowry from Mikidadi as shown in verses 146 -152 in the epic. Mikidadi agreed and headed to the desert with his friend Khamisi to go and rope people wealth for him to afford the expensive dowry. As narrated in verse 160 of the epic of Mikidadi and Mayasa below.

84. verse 160

*Niushikapo upanga*

*dunia yote hitanga*



*mali yote tayatunga*

*haibudi kutimia.*

### **Family and community cohesion in the *epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali***

The writer did not develop this hero with a family cohesion but he had a strong community follow up. Community members demanded that Nguvumali be called so that he may unearth the killers of Salima. It was clear from the evidence inflicted on the body of Salima that she was killed by witches. Ironically, the leader of the sorcerers Mr Shambi Bin Dima was in the front line demanding that the medicine man Nguvumali be brought in. This can be seen in verse 184 below.

85. verse 184

*Bwana Shambi kalatwili*

*Nakujitia fahari:*

*'Hapa aje Nguvumali*

*Ndio haswa welekea.*

The government cohesion with Nguvumali was historically evident. In verses 355-361, the writer avails evidence showing that the government had worked with Nguvumali to cleanse the city not once, but many times from the past governments. For instance, Nguvumali displayed a document showing signatures of the past city mayors who had signed a city cleansing agreement with him in verse 358. The paper found out that Nguvumali as an African epic hero had the element of cohesion and therefore was an African epic hero.

98. Ubeti wa 358

*Akazona saini*

*Zilizotiwa zamani*

*'Basi nimisha amini*

*Basi kazi shamburia.'*

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This paper was able to establish that the selected Kiswahili *Epics of Fumo Liyongo, Mikidadi na Mayasa, and Swifa ya Nguvumali* had heroes as per the tenets of the theory of mythology by Okpewho (1979) as follows:

- i. An African epic hero can be from a high or ordinary social class
- ii. An African epic hero has unique and extraordinary human powers
- iii. An African epic hero has magic and he/she is guided by supernatural powers
- iv. An African epic hero has a community follow up.



This paper established and identified the following characters from the selected Kiswahili epics of Fumo Liyongo, Mikidadi na Mayasa and Swifa ya Nguvumali to be African epic heroes.

- i. Fumo Liyongo
- ii. Mikidadi
- iii. Mayasa
- iv. Nguvumali

These were the evidences to back up the reason why the research proved that the characters were true African epic heroes as per the tenets of mythology.

### ***The Epic of Fumo Liyongo.***

The researcher established that Fumo Liyongo was An African epic hero, because he was depicted the with following African epic hero traits:

- i. Fumo Liyongo was magical in his actions. He was led by supernatural powers and that is why it was had to arrest and kill him.
- ii. Fumo Liyongo had a close cohesion with his maid by name Saad, and his mother. Through this cohesion he was rescued from the cells. Through family cohesion, his mother had to bury him when he died. Fumo Liyongo had a strong community follow up. People wanted to associate themselves with Fumo Liyongo because he was a hero. This was evident with Sanye men who wanted to be collecting fruits as gang of men from their community with Fumo Liyongo. The Gala people as well wanted to be associated with Fumo Liyongo, and that is why they requested king Daudi Mringwari to have Fumo Liyongo sire with their daughter. King Daudi himself was proud of Fumo Liyongo as a Pate hero, and that is why he was parading him before the Gala convoy.
- iii. Fumo Liyongo was an ordinary social class person. He lived with his mother away from the palace. It's the researcher's opinion that, the writer artistically placed Fumo Liyongo in such life so that he can be oppressed by his brother king Daudi Mringwari. Through this oppression, Fumo Liyongo's heroic traits were developed. Historically, Fumo Liyongo was from a high social class child because his father was a king of Pate, but fate moved him to low social class life.
- iv. Fumo Liyongo was strong and had a huge masculine body, he had super thing abilities, he was a great poet, he was war like person and had other extraordinary human traits.

### ***The Epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa***

*The epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa* was an epic whose conflicts centered around the theme of marriage conflicts surrounding Mayasa.

The researcher established with context evidence that Mikidadi and Mayasa were the key African epic heroes in the *Epic of Mikidadi na Mayasa* because they possessed a number of elements as laid by the tenets of mythology as follows:





## Mikidadi

- i. Mikidadi was from a low social class even though his family historically places him in the high social class. Its fate that led him to be in the low social class as explained in the data and results section.
- ii. Mikidadi had extraordinary human traits. He was very strong and intelligent. He was poetic and was war like person. He fought against many soldiers and actually won the fight. He was fearless such that he even fought spirits and even won the war against spirits. He fought like a lion and killed it. These were not a normal human being traits.
- iii. Mikidadi had magical powers. The researcher found out that Mikidadi was spiritually driven. He spiritually fought with the evil spirit at the well in the desert and won. He fought many soldiers and won, he behaved like he was not human because it was only in the spiritual world anybody can achieve what he achieved.
- iv. Mikidadi had close cohesion with his mother and Uncle Turadi. He equally benefited a lot from the follow up he had from people like Ali. Ali was a spiritual follower of prophet Muhamad. Mikidadi as well benefited from the cohesion he had with Khamisi. He was able to go to the desert and rope people wealth because of the support he had from Khamisi.

## Mayasa

Comparatively Mayasa was the only woman the researcher identified as a true African epic hero. The rest of the heroes from the selected Kiswahili *epics of Swifa ya Nguvumali and Fumo Liyongo* were men. The researcher identified Mayasa as a heroine from the way she exposed African epic hero traits as follows:

- i. Mayasa was from a high social class because his father was from the Arab origin and was rich. His father always identified himself with greatness.
- ii. Mayasa was identified as a heroine because she possessed many talents. She was poetic and very strong. She applied war tricks against re known Arab fighters and won the fights. She killed many men during these fights. She was strict and straight forward in getting her demands. She demanded to be married by a war hero not just rich man. She chose her husband through a physical fight. These were extraordinary human traits, especially for a woman.
- iii. Mayasa was spiritually driven because she did magical actions in her life. She staged thunderous fight against men. She even had courage to confront Ali and beg for Mikidadi's release. This courage was spiritually driven.
- iv. Mayasa had close ties with his father. She informed him all about her wish to marry a hero who will win a battle against her. The writer isolated Myasa fom a community follow ups.
- v. The only community follow up she had were the spectators who came to witness her stage a fight against the suiters. This was an abnormal event in the community.



### ***The Epic of Swifa ya Nguvumali***

This epic centered its conflicts around spiritual matters. The hero fought spiritually with witches in the community. Nguvumali was the hero and he actually won all his battles against the witchcrafts. The hero in this epic was identified in a unique way. Comparatively he was different from the rest of the heroes as indicated from the selected Kiswahili epics of *Fumo Liyongo* and *Mikidadi and Mayasa* because he wasn't having to all requirements of an African epic hero, but his actions were spiritually identified as follows:

- i. He used his magic charm to arrest the witches who killed Salima. He made the witches drunk spiritually, which thing exposed them as the killers of Salima.
- ii. He fought not physically like his counterparts in the rest of the epics but spiritually and won a spiritual battle between him and the team of witchcrafts led by Mr Shambi Bin Dima. He snatched Shambi Bin Dima his authority.
- iii. He died in a unique way as he was heading back home. This confirms the idea that the birth and death of heroes is unique and it is spiritually driven.
- iv. He had close cohesion with the community members and the government. The writer did not tell us more about his family. This confirms that he was An African epic hero.
- v. He did not have extraordinary physical powers like his colleagues from the other selected epics, but his spiritual powers were manifested.

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