

More than Just Warriors

Mythical and Archetypal Images of the Hero in Swahili Literature

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Since ancient times till today the image of the hero has universally influenced literary works. The “hero” becomes mythical only after his death, and through a form of remembrance realized in literary productions where his figure is re-created and transmitted through fictitious characters. The central focus of the paper is to examine, within the archetypal theories on myth and “hero,” the figures of two Swahili warriors, namely Liongo Fumo, one of the greatest warrior-hero figures of the Swahili oral tradition, and Chief Mkwawa of the Hehe people, who fought against the German rule in former Tanganyika, and whose deeds have been reinvented and described in modern written literature. Both Liongo Fumo and Mkwawa have acquired the status of mythical warriors, and, as other East African heroes, have inspired poets and writers and become symbols of bravery and national consciousness to which the historical and cultural memory of old and new generations refer. A second part of the work is devoted to the presentation of those who can be defined as “minor heroes” and who nevertheless represent a new way to look at literature and a bridge between tradition and modernity through the use of historical and mythical memory.

1. On Archetype and Criticism: A Brief Note

The word ‘archetype’ derives from Latin *archetypum* meaning “the original form.” The formulation of a theory of archetypes began in 1912 and marked a split with Freudian theory and the beginning of Jung’s stream of depth psychology – albeit Jung’s first use of the term ‘archetype’ occurred later in 1919¹ (Roesler 2012: 223). Jungian archetypal theory is based on the concept of a collective unconscious and argues that any individual’s personality is characterized by two dynamic interacting realms:

- *consciousness*, where two structures co-exist, namely Ego (the locus of the conscious field), and Persona (the individual mask);

¹ Before using the term archetype, Jung preferred the words “primordial images” – giving them the meaning of “foundations” – an idea that came to him in his attempt to explain the ubiquitous nature of certain cultural motifs which could be explained only taking recourse to some sort of collective human inheritance (Wamitila 2001: 75).

- *unconsciousness*, divided in its turn into personal – a repository of conscious or repressed experiences – and collective unconsciousness, which contains all the archetypes that are based upon Platonic theory of forms or ideas (Wamitila 2001: 74-75; Roesler 2012: 225; Stinchcomb 2013: 3).

In Jung²'s conceptualization, the archetype – having form but not content – is an innate pattern of perception and behavior which influences human perception and action and shapes it into similar forms: archetypes are autonomous from consciousness and are universal. It means that it is possible to find the same set of archetypes in all human beings: they are recognized within the subconscious and universally understood. Jung (1958) describes the archetypes as primordial universal images – such as gods and demons, the hero, the great mother, or the wise old man. All these figures are anchored to some moral principle, one that would confront the individual and constrain his or her action (Braga 2016: 226). According to von Franz (1975: 125-126), a clear distinction must be made between the archetypes and archetypal images: the archetypes are very probably innate structural predispositions which appear in actual experience as the factor, or element, which orders or arranges representations into certain patterns, whereas archetypal images appear in form of mythological and/or symbolic representations which are common to certain collectives, such as whole people of epochs. Even before Jung, it was known that there is a high degree of similarity between mythological narratives in peoples living in different parts of the world (Aarne and Thompson 1961).

According to Leigh (2015: 98), archetypal literary criticism moves in several directions at once – textual, intertextual and psychological. It often locates archetypes in the plot, characters, imagery, and setting of the text. Archetypal criticism of literature became widespread among literary critics through Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957), which created a structural map of literary genres derived from the four seasons: comedy from spring, romance from summer, tragedy from autumn, and satire from winter. The Fryean concept of archetype is not psychological like Jung's but rather structural: he defines an archetype as a symbol – usually an image – which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literacy experience as a whole (Frye 1957:365). Booker (2004) applied his own version of Jungian archetypal psychology to numerous

²Jung began as an empirical psychologist within Freud's circle in Wien, but gradually became interested in examining the role of archetypes in literary texts, and in 1920s and 1930s spoke and wrote on the relationship between analytical psychology, poetry, and literature. As Leigh claims, even if Jung's literary interpretations were often inadequate, his own criticism led to more sophisticated interpretations of the archetypal imagery in the so-called 'archetypal literary criticism' (Leigh 2015: 97).

narratives. In recent times, it seems that the most prominent current theory of archetype is based on the so called emergent/developmental model,³ that sees archetype as a product of emergence processes (Knox 2001, 2003, 2004; Merchant 2006).

2. The myth of the hero

The heroic age seems always to be past, and yet, whatever time we live in, we seem always to need heroes: figures who attract and capture our imaginations, whose thoughts and actions cut new channels, whose lives matter because they occupy a new territory (Edwards 1979: 33).

Myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality; they express the inner side of individual and his/her relationship with the others, the nature and the supernatural: they are seen as vehicles conveying certain fact or truth about a man's experiences in his/her encounter with the created order and the relation with the super-sensible world (Jaja 2014: 9-10). For Brezinsky (2015), myths have been created to answer the most basic questions concerning human existence. The term 'myth' denotes "something told" or a "story," "speech," and "words." Every myth tells a certain "sacred story" which refers to some "primordial event" which happened in the so-called "primordial time" at the beginning of the world and of human history. Myths show how a given reality come into existence thanks to the intervention of "supernatural beings" referring not only to the whole universe but also to human behaviour. The heroes of myths are, thus, supernatural beings who enter the human world (Brezinski 2015: 13-20). According to Edwards (1979), even when the hero is a supposedly historical figure, he is always an invention, a recurring figure who emerges out of collaboration between the collective and the private. The result of this collaboration seems to follow a kind of typical pattern, with such elements as: familiar hostility, strained or combative relations between the heroic figure and the parents; a sense of specialness, of uniqueness and of isolation developing within the hero in response to the particular circumstances of his birth and early life; the undertaking of a literal or symbolic journey as an attempt on the part of the hero to put some distance between the Self and the opposing society; the endurance of trials and tests of both physical

³ The Emergence model is supported by the findings of developmental biologists who adhere to Developmental System Theory. Knox (2004: 1) claims that in developmental model, mental contents emerge from the interaction of genes, brain and environment. Merchant (2006: 125) adds that the model implies an archetype-environment nexus; it collapses the 'sacred' heritage approach to archetypes, and removes the conceptual division between the collective and personal unconscious.

and psychological strength, including an encounter with death itself (Edwards 1979: 33-34). Following Jung, who calls the hero a self-representation of the longing of the unconscious for the light of consciousness (Jung 1977: 205), it seems that the hero exists as a kind of character involved in a particular set of actions with a particular relationship to a social and metaphysical universe. Reed (1978) suggests that the heroic character tends toward freedom from the confines of the plot. The hero's desire for radical change is one of the factors distancing the hero himself from the surrounding society. The symbolic imagery of distance or liminality has been examined by Turner (1995: 95) and is frequently linked to death. For Campbell (1949), the hero becomes a rebel to the status quo, the established order of things, and manifests himself in historical time when the established world of reason and laws is no longer capable of satisfying the vital needs of humankind. If the hero is defined as a strong man, highly born and wealthy, and whose principal concern is the acquisition of power, and who acquires this sovereignty directly as the result of some combination of cunning and brute force, what about his female counterpart? As Goethals and Scott suggest, the English word "hero" is derived from the Greek word ἥρωϛ for a hero or warrior in the sense of protector or defender, and the original Hero in Greek mythology was a woman, a priestess of Aphrodite, the goddess of love (Goethals and Scott 2012: 186). Stressing the fact that the myth is the unconscious representation of a crucial life situation and analyzing Amor and Psyche in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, Neumann (1971: 63, 65, 93) explains the nature of the "woman hero" as follows:

in rejecting both Aphrodite and Eros, Psyche [...] enters into a heroic struggle of the feminine that ushers in a new human era [...] Psyche becomes a feminine Heracles (Neumann 1971: 93)

Mbele (2006: 62-65) focuses on the subject of women in the African epic and makes interesting observations on the issue of women heroes and female heroism, further claiming that the problem is one of perspective and inadequate research and documentation of the existing traditions. Women characters play various role in African epics, including heroic roles, but the experiences and actions of men get more attention than those of women. Askew (1999) highlights transformations in gender relations within the Swahili communities of the Swahili coast stating that there are a number of references in both oral traditions and historical documents to females addressed with the title of *Mwana*, which translates alternatively as "madam," "queen," or "child" (Askew 1999: 81). She stresses that even if male rulers dominated, an impressive number of sources document female leaders in the Lamu archipelago, in Mombasa and the islands of Pemba, Tumbatu, Mafia and Zanzibar. The earliest records of titled females on the Swahili coast identify *Mwana Mkisi* as the first ruler of Mombasa in

the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, there are several queens of Pemba, namely Mwana Mize binti Muaba, Mwana Fatuma binti Dathash, Mwana Hadiya and Mwana Aisha. In the Lamu archipelago, there was Mwana Inali of Kitao, who committed suicide rather than suffer defeat at the hands of the people from Pate, and Asha binti Muhammad, who was known as Asha Ngumi, ruler of Ngumi and who is also reputed to have organized a force of a thousand men to launch an attack on a neighboring chief at Port Dunford. In the eighteenth century, Mwana Khadija and Mwana Darini played a significant role in Pate politics, followed in the early nineteenth century by Fatuma binti Ali and Mwana Kazija binti Ngwali (Askew 1999: 82-84).

2.1. Archetypal images of Liongo Fumo:⁴ the mythical epic⁵ hero

Liongo, Liyongo Fumo, or Fumo Liongo (Mbele 1986: 464) is considered the most famous character in the Swahili epic⁶ and the national hero of the Swahili people. Liongo is one of the most impressive personalities in the oral and literary tradition of the Swahili coast. His legends and those of his entourage are very well preserved in the memory of the coastal people and have become an integral part of the national cultural heritage of Kenya and Tanzania. The complete Liongo's epic has not been preserved. There are only a few fragments, the largest being the *Utenzi wa Liongo* ("The Epic of Liongo") by Muhammad Kijumwa, a master-calligraphist (Knappert 1983; Mieke *et al.* 2004). Liongo is not only a legendary hero but was also a bard, and Allen suggests that parts of Liongo Saga were composed by Liongo himself in the 14th or 15th century, because he is mentioned in the Pate Chronicles as ruling over his seven towns at about this time, and as having subdued the kingdom of Ozi. As folk-heroes do, Liongo typifies the Swahili values: in fact he sings, dances and versifies, but he is more an archetypal African warrior than a polished townsman or merchant prince (Allen 1982: 230-231). Liongo has been compared to many other traditional and famous heroes belonging to other cultures: like Siegfried and Achilles, he is vulnerable only in one particular spot; like Robin Hood or

⁴ On Liongo Fumo see: Steere (1870: 438-451); Werner (1933: 145-154); Werner (1926-28: 247-255); Harries (1962); Knappert (1979: 66-107); Knappert (1983: 142-168); Mieke (2004).

⁵ The word for Swahili epic is *utenzi* (pl. *tenzi*), or *utendi*. The term means "action," and Knappert suggests that its original meaning was "performance" or "creative activity." The main theme of epic poetry is the hero, his life, his greatness of character, his deeds and his death (Knappert 1983: 47, 58).

⁶ As Kesteloot claims, African epics may be grouped under two main headings: the 'feudal' and the 'clan' epics. Feudal epics, which are linked to the heroes and warriors histories, are distinctive of societies organized into hierarchical professional castes bearing features analogous to those of European feudal societies. The 'clan' epics are always very long narratives punctuated by music, but they deviate far more from the history of the peoples that produce them. She suggests that it is possible to include the Swahili epic in the feudal category (Kesteloot 1989: 204-205).

William Tell, he is a great archer; like king Solomon, he dies with his head and back upright and stays rigid in that position, so that nobody dare approach him; like the Cid Campeador, he fights the nations' enemies, while the king intrigues against him (Knappert 1983; Wamitila 2001).

He was called *Fumo*, a term that refers to a king or chief:⁷

<i>Hadithi ya mfalume</i>	The legend of the king
<i>Mkuu wa wanaume</i>	A leader of the men,
<i>Mithali ya nyati ndume</i>	Like the big bull in the herd
<i>Fumo wa Sawahiliya</i>	the king of the Swahili
(Knappert 1983: 144)	(Knappert 1983: 144).

One of the key attribute of the hero discussed in psychological criticism is the hero's image as a protector of his community:

<i>Liyongo silaha yetu</i>	Liyongo is our weapon
[...]	[...]
<i>Alikuwa ngao yetu</i>	He was our shield
<i>Wute wakinena haya</i>	All people said this
(Mulokozi 1999: 57)	(King'ei 2001: 90).

On the physical aspect of Liyongo it is said to be an unusually huge man who could not be compared to any other human (King'ei 2001: 89):

<i>Liyongo kitamakali</i>	Liyongo grew up
<i>Akabalighi rijali</i>	Into a strong young man
<i>Akawa mtu wa kweli</i>	He became a real man
<i>Na haiba kaongeya</i>	He became more beautiful.
<i>Kimo kawa mrefu</i>	He grew tall
<i>Mpana sana mrefu</i>	Huge and tall
<i>Majimboni yu maarufu</i>	Famous throughout the land
<i>Watu huya kuangaliya</i>	People came to know him
(Mulokozi 1999: 23-24)	(King'ei 2001: 89)

⁷ He is called King of Shanga on Pate island and of Shaha on the Ozi river (Knappert 1983: 144).

Liongo represents the supernatural hero. According to Deme, the supernatural is the fundamental condition for the existence of the African epic. She states that:

The belief in the supernatural is what gives the African epic its unique heroic proportion. The presence of the marvelous, the fantastic is part and parcel of the dramatic storyline and does not take anything away from the veracity of the tale or its true heroism. [...] The existence of the marvelous and the recourse to supernatural means by the hero symbolize his consciousness about his own weaknesses and limitations as a human being and his desire to transcend them [...] The use of the supernatural in African oral epics conforms to one of the most widespread beliefs related to chieftaincy in traditional African societies, that of divine nature of kingship [...] (Deme 2009: 408).

The prodigious nature of the hero is predicted in the following verses on his birth and first years of life, where the archetypal image of the “child” is revealed. It is an important symbol of the Self and one that is usually captured by the references to heroic figures as being a “child of the royal house” (Wamitila 2001: 107):

<i>Liongo yuzewa jumbani</i>	Liongo was born in a palace
<i>Mama yake kuzalani</i>	His mother, while she was giving birth
<i>Kayuwa yu mwenye shani</i>	Knew that he was a prodigy
<i>Imara na ushujaa</i>	That he would be strong and brave.
<i>Na Liyongo akakuwa</i>	Liyongo grew up
<i>Nguvu nyingi akatiwa</i>	Got great strength
<i>Na usemi akapowa</i>	Received the gift of speech
<i>Kwandika kayifundiya</i>	And taught himself to write.
(Knappert 1983: 145)	(Knappert 1983: 145).

As Mbele (2014: 4-5) highlights, deception plays an important part in the epic of Liongo, involving a series of attempts by King Mringwari to kill him. Mringwari is afraid that Liongo might usurp the throne. Liongo hears about the king’s plot to kill him, escapes from the city and goes to live among the forest people. Mringwari, enlists the help of the forest people, namely the Sanye and the Dahalo,⁸

⁸ Sanye and Dahalo are two hunting-gathering peoples of Kenya. The Sanye (or Aweer, or still Boni, from Somali *boon* ‘hunters’) number at least a few thousands and inhabit the interior of the Kenya coast from Lamu to the Somali border and

and promises them a reward if they kill Liongo. They propose him to eat in common: each of them have to provide the meal in turns. When he refuses because is too poor to provide the meals, they say that their meals consist of *makoma*, the fruit of dum palm. Their plan is to shoot Liongo with arrows, when it is his turn to be upon the tree. When Liongo's turn comes, he first chooses the tallest palm, and then foils their plan by shooting down the fruits with his bow and arrows:

66. <i>Achaangusha ngaa ndima</i>	He brought down a cluster of fruits
<i>Na mangi mno makoma</i>	Such a cluster of very many fruits
<i>Na w'ute wakaatama</i>	(That) they were amazed and
<i>Ajabu zikawangiya</i>	Wonder reveted them all.
67. <i>Wakanena moyoni</i>	They murmured to themselves
<i>Amuwezao ni nyani</i>	Who can get the better of him
<i>Huyuno hawezekani</i>	Man is simply invincible and
<i>Ni kutaka kwangamiya</i>	To attempt to harm him is to court disaster.
(Wamitila 2001: 138)	(Wamitila 2001: 138).

Seeing this, Sanye and Dahalo go away convinced that Liongo is a spirit (Mbele 2014: 6). Concerning this episode, Wamitila states that, although the epic does not mention famine, it seems implicated in the text:

Mentioning the famine is of psychological importance [...] Experiences like hunger and thirst may be associated with aspects of the rejected shadow⁹ or equated with the forces of subjection represented by the king [...] one can see the trap intended by the tribesmen as a collective evil, they purpose to kill the hero. The hero's accepting to join them, be party to this collective evil or shadow as it were, is a way to accepting and coming to terms with his own evil shadow (Wamitila 2001: 139).

When the hero's enemies fail to kill him, they report to the king, who then organizes *mwao* and *gungu* dances – which for Wamitila symbolize archetypal music (Wamitila 2001: 140). According to Mbele

maybe beyond. The Dahalo are just a few hundreds, and live south of the Sanye. Both the Sanye and the Dahalo speak separate Cushitic languages belonging to different subgroups: the Sanye (linguistically usually called Boni) speak a language close to Somali (ISO 639-3: bob; Tosco 1994 is a tentative linguistic history), while the Dahalo (who are very possibly shifting to Swahili; Tosco 1992) speak either an Eastern or a Southern Cushitic language (ISO 639-3: dal) which is characterized by the presence of a phonemic dental click; Tosco (1991) is a grammatical sketch.

⁹ "Shadow" is used by Jung to refer the negative side of the personality (Jung 1953).

(2014: 9), when Mringwari uses the dance to trap Liongo, he is exploiting Liongo's love for dance, a sentiment characteristic of the Swahili people as a whole. During the dance, Liongo is captured and jailed. While in prison, Liongo thinks of plans to escape: since his mother used to send the slave girl Saada¹⁰ to the prison to bring him food, during these visits he teaches Saada a song with the secret message to his mother of a file with which to cut his chains:

[...]	[...]
[...]	[...]
<i>Afanye mkate kati tupa kaweka</i>	Let her bake a loaf of bran bread and in it insert a file
<i>Nikereze pingu na minyoo ikinemuka</i>	So that I can cut these shakles and break my chains
<i>Nikateleze nde kama kozi 'katoroka</i>	That I may slip and escape like a falcon
[...]	[...]
[...]	[...]
<i>Ningie shakani ningurume ja simba buka</i>	That I may appear in the fields and roar like a fierce lion
<i>Ningie ondoni ninyepeee ja mwana nyoka</i>	That I may creep in the reeds like a fierce snake
[...]	[...]
(Wamitila 2001: 184)	(Wamitila 2001: 184).

The heroic image of Liongo is created through the use of metaphoric images: the *kozi* (falcon), belongs to what Frye calls analogy of nature and reason, and is crucial in depicting the heroic leadership in high mimetic mode; *nyoka* (snake) is an archetype characterized by polyvalence and ambiguity: it symbolizes both evil and wisdom; and *simba* (lion) is associated with the sun, a particular symbol that appears in several religious poems (Wamitila 2001: 159-165).

After Liongo's escape, King Mringwari decides to send Liongo's son to him to find out how he can be killed – which is a copper needle in his navel. One day, the son finds his father in deep sleep. He stabs him in the navel with the copper needle. The navel is strictly connected with the prenatal life, and symbolizes the vital link to the mother and the individual's vulnerability. As Wamitila states, Liongo' death by a copper needle may symbolize the hero encounter with the original source of life,

¹⁰ Knappert reports the name Sada '(the happy one;' Knappert 1983:162).

from where everything started. In Jungian psychology, death is seen as a counterpoint to birth and a symbol for the exuberance of all life processes (Wamitila 2001: 143-144).

2.2. The Chief Mkwawa wa Uhehe, alias the loneliness of the warrior

In the history of Swahili literature, writers and poets have been often inspired by historical figures. Mazrui states that poetry¹¹ which sought to document the colonial situation in what had become German East Africa is very important (Mazrui 2007: 20). Topan claims that the confrontation of the European colonial rules has had a significant impact on biography writing; particular is the relationship between biography and drama (Topan 1997: 302, 304). An example is Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe* (Mkwawa of Heheland), first published in 1979,¹² whose precedent is the *Tragedy of Mkwawa* written in English by Mulokozi in 1968¹³ and translated in Swahili as *Yaliyomsibu Mkwawa*. Literature and historical memory are connected even though in literary works reality is only an initial inspiration. In fact, when a drama – as Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe* – is performed on stage, or read, what remains in the memory of spectators or readers is only what the author chooses to reveal. In Mulokozi's play *Mkwawa wa Uhehe*, which is set in the territory of the Hehe (the modern region of Iringa), the author spells the names of the characters, the towns and the rivers as they are pronounced in the Hehe language (Bantu G60; ISO 639-3: heh) and '[...] not in the way they are found in the history and geography books written by the 'intellectual colonisers' [...]' (Mulokozi 1988: iii).¹⁴ For example, Mkwawa is Mukwava, Muyugumba is Munyigumba, Kalenga is Kwilenga, and Ruaha is Ruvaha.

¹¹ Three poems constitute an important source of historical study of German colonial period in Tanganyika: Hemed Al-Buhry's *Utenzi wa Wadachi Kutamalaki Mrima* ('The Epic of German Rule of Mrima' 1955), Abdulkarim bin Jamaliddin's *Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji Maji* ('The Epic of the Maji Maji War,' 1957), and Mwenzo Shomari's *Kufa k wa Mkwawa* (The Death of Mkwawa').

¹² The edition published in 1988 by the Dar es Salaam University Press will be used.

¹³ In the same year, *Johari Ndogo* (The Little Jewel) by Felician V. I. Nkwera was published. It contains two plays: the first is *Mkwawa Mahinya*, an historical drama about the chief Mkwawa and his fight against German colonial rule and the second, *Ushindi wa Tiba mwana kitinda mimba* (The victory of Tiba, the last born), a tale about the Ngoni people on the motif of the three king's sons who set forth in search of the water of life (Bertoncini Zúbková et al. 2009: 338).

¹⁴ '[...] siyo kama yalivyohifadhiwakatika vitabu vya historia na jiografia vilivyoandikwa na 'wataalamu' wa kikoloni [...]' (Mulokozi 1988: iii). English version mine.

But who was the real Mkwawa? It is said that Mukwavinyika¹⁵ Munyigumba Mwamunyinga, known by the name of Mkwawa,¹⁶ was born in 1855 in Luhota, Iringa rural District, Uhehe (i.e., land of Hehe people), in former Tanganyika. Nothing is known about his childhood, except that he was called by the nickname of Ndasalasi, meaning “he who caresses with his hands looking for something with his fingers” in Hehe. Since his very childhood he showed the capacity to find things quickly (Musso 2011: 68; Mulokozi 1988: 4).

There is also little information about the Hehe people and their origins.¹⁷ The name Hehe was not recorded until 1860s, and is said to be derived from their war-cry “Hee! Hee!” (Crema 1987: 7; Musso 2011: 14-15; Peers 2005: 17). The earliest historical data concerning the Hehe and their land came through the first Swahili, Arab and European traders. When the Arabs began to trade in firearms and gun-powder that they exchanged for slaves and ivory, central Tanganyika was a peaceful area inhabited by small dispersed groups (Mumford 1934; Iliffe 1979; Redmayne 1968). According to Redmayne (1968: 410), the Arabs’ increasing arms trade was an important factor in the history of tribal warfare and alliances until the German government gained control of the whole territory.

The fate of Mkwawa is closely connected to the history of his land and the Hehe people (Wahehe in Swahili) during the German colonial rule. When the Germans arrived (1890), the Hehe were the dominant power in southern Tanganyika: military organization was the dominant element in their life, and every adult man was a warrior (Iliffe 1979: 57), so the greatest challenge to German authority came from the Wahehe under their leader Mkwawa. Between 1860 and 1880 the Hehe had emerged as a leading tribe, and during the 1860s and 1870s Munyigumba, Mkwawa’s father, had conquered the chiefdoms of northern Uhehe. In due course, many other Hehe chiefs either submitted to Munyigumba or simply fled. He united the numerous Hehe clans into a well organized an aggressive military force in Southern Tanzania. He died in 1879 and Mkwawa continued his aggressive policies,

¹⁵ According to Omari (2011: 70) Mukwavinyika means “Conqueror of Dry Grassland” in Hehe. According to Redmayne (1970: 103), the name derives from the Hehe words *kukwava inyika* meaning “to capture plains.”

¹⁶ In literature there are many variants of this name including Kwawa or Kuawa, Quawa, Mkwaba, Mkwatika or Mkuanika, Mukwawi Nyika, Kwawinyika or Kwawanjika, and Mkuu wa Nyika (Redmayne 1968; Crema 1987; Musso 2011). According to Redmayne (1968: 409; Redmayne 1970: 103), Mkwawa is the accepted spelling of the name used by his descendants and is the common version.

¹⁷ According to Mumford, the Iringa district was peopled by various ethnic groups, such as the Yinga, a small tribe who took the name of their first great chief Muyinga; the Hafiwa, a group named after their chief Mhafiwa; the Dongwe that received their name and have accepted it as descriptive of a custom of their group to wear special tufts of hair, and the Zungwa, whose name meant the people of the country of the hot sun and so on (Mumford 1934: 203-204).

first fighting the Ngoni¹⁸, and then raiding for cattle and ivory in all directions (Roberts 1969: 70; Lipschutz and Rasmussen 1989: 147; Peers 2005: 17; Iliffe 1973). The trade route from the coast to Tabora – founded by Arab traders in 1850s and soon becoming a centre of the slave trade (Jeal 2011: 76) - and beyond passed through Mkwawa's empire. In about 1887 Mkwawa consolidated his position by moving his capital to a stone fort in the hills of Kalenga:¹⁹ he and his people became a symbol of resistance (Pike 1986: 213). Gwassa states that he levied customs duty, or *hongo*, from those who traded through or in his empire. Reports of heavy *hongo* galled the Germans, and they wished to have Mkwawa under their control. The events that led to the German-Hehe clash showed only too well the German failure to understand and grasp the realities of African politics and practice.²⁰ Von Prince, an experienced officer who had spent some years in learning all he could about the Southern Highlands, and getting in touch with many Hehe chiefs and other members of Mkwawa's own family, attacked Kalenga, and on October 30, 1894 took the city and Mkwawa's palace. Mkwawa himself escaped to engage in guerilla war for four years. Finally, sick and alone, he committed suicide rather than fall into the enemy's hands (Winans 1994: 225; Gwassa 1969: 115). The dramatic character of Mkwawa was created following Mulokozi's inspiration. In the work he is described as a middle-aged man, at the height of his fame in and beyond the confines of the Uhehe territory. The aura of grandeur that envelops the character is already evident in the first scene, when he appears wearing the *magolole*, a typical Hehe mantle, and a turban that represent the clothes of chiefs or of people worthy of respect. In his hands he holds a flyswatter and a lance, symbols of majesty and audacity. Welcomed with trills and drums, speaking to his people about unity and brotherhood he warns them of the looming danger:

Mkwawa: "... Wahehe, even though we have beaten the Masai [...] the Wangoni, the Wanyamwezi and the Wasangu, they are no longer our enemies now. [...] they are our brothers [...] as you know there are greater and crueller enemies who in secret are preparing to invade us. We have already beaten the Arabs. They cannot return. But there is an enemy we have not beaten yet. Who is he?"

¹⁸ During the 1830s the Ngoni warriors fought their way northwards from Natal in South Africa, as far north as Ufipa in south-western Tanzania (Roberts 1969: 68).

¹⁹ The fort was known as Kalenga ("little water"), Ilinga ("stockhade") and Lipuli ("strong elephant;" Redmayne 1968: 424-425).

²⁰ It seems that a series of incidents convinced Mkwawa that the Germans were treating him with contempt, and insulting him as an independent ruler: if Mkwawa sent presents to the Germans according to the custom they did not return presents. This was against Mkwawa's expectations and an affront to his person (Gwassa 1969: 114).

Wahehe: “The European!” (Mulokozi 1988: 23)²¹

He is aware that the next war could bring ruin to his people:

Mukwawa: “Remember, this is a war to defend our land [...] protect our freedom [...] Hard times await us. It will be a very bad moment for cowards and for traitors, but for the courageous [...] it will be a time for glory. Wahehe, are you ready?” (Mulokozi 1988: 24)²²

In historical reality, the Germans tried to strike a deal with Mkwawa (Gwassa 1969: 114), but in the play his wife Semusilamugunda’s efforts are not enough to convince him to accept. He swears he will never sell his land:

Mukwawa: The European will come or not come. If he comes he will face the heroes of the land of the Hehe [...] They will be the days when heads will be counted and the drums of the elders will sound. It will be a great feast (...) we shall fight to the end. But we shall not sell the land of the Uhehe. [...] Absolutely, I shall not sell the land of the Uhehe!” (Mulokozi 1988: 35)²³.

This passage probably anticipates the vision of the battle that took place near the Rugaro river: among the bodies left on the battlefield were ten Germans, 250 colonial troops, and around 100 porters. About 260 Wahehe had been killed (Peers 2005: 17).

Historically, Mkwawa continued to fight his war in the forest for other four years, hiding with his men. However, the weapons of the Germans were too powerful and when he realized that he would soon be captured he preferred suicide:

Mukwawa: “... There is still hope. But not today, tomorrow. And not for this generation, perhaps for the ones of the future. [...] The enemies that are searching for me are near. I

²¹ Mukwawa: [...] Wahehe, ingawa tumewashinda Wamasai [...] Wangoni na Wanyamwezi na Wasangu, lakini sisi hao sio maadui zetu hasa [...] hao ni ndugu zetu. [...] kama mnavyofahamu, kuna maadui wakubwa na wabaya zaidi wanaotayarisha njama ya kutuvamia. Waarabu tulikwisha washinda. Hawawezi kurudi. Lakini yupo adui mwingine ambaye hatujamshinda. Ni nani huyo?

Wahehe: Mzungu! (Mulokozi 1988: 23). English version mine.

²² Mukwawa: “Kumbukeni, hivi ni vita vya kuhiamia ardhi yetu [...] vya kuulinda uhuru wetu [...] Mbele yetu kuna wakati mgumu. Utakuwa ni wakati mbaya kwa waoga na wasaliti, bali kwa mashujaa [...] utakuwa ni wakati mtukufu Wahehe, mko tayari?” (Mulokozi 1988: 24). English version mine.

²³ Mukwawa: Mzungu atakuja au hatakuja. Akija atawakuta mashujaa wa Uhehe [...] Zitakuwa ni siku za kuhesabu vichwa na kuicheza ngoma ya wahenga. Itakuwa ni ngoma kuu [...] Tutapigana mpaka mwisho. Lakini hatutaiuza Uhehe. [...] Kamwe, sitaiuza Uhehe!” (Mulokozi 1988: 35). English version mine.

don't want to find me like this. I cannot live in slavery. [...] Better to die rather than be a slave. [...] there is nothing left for the Mhehe. Everything is bought or sold for money: even people are sold, even the land is sold. [...] I hate the European! [...] I hate this slavery! [...] A day will come when all the blacks [...] from the east coasts to the west coasts will cry together (with one voice) to claim their right to freedom and their land. That day those who are still living will be filled with joy and dead heroes will live again. [...] even now [...] I can hear the joyful voices of the heroes calling me. My country is calling. I GO!" (he shoots and dies immediately) (Mulokozi 1988: 102-103)²⁴

In this passage it is clear that the warrior-hero follows the traditional African belief that is referred to as ancestors worship, on the basis of an understanding of life course as cyclical and not linear: those who are dead are alive in a different world. According to Ekore and Lanre-Abasi (2016: 370), it is an African cultural belief that to be in the world of the dead confers supernatural powers over those in the world of the living, such as the ability to bless - in the case of Mkwawa, to bless his people - or to curse the enemies. From an archetypal point of view, the death of the warrior - whose key attributes are honour, courage, loyalty and self-control (Pressfield 2011: 39, 54) - means that he has finally encountered his limitations: he has met the enemy, and his own dark side, his unheroic side. As Hollis states:

The suffering of loneliness brings the encounter with the Self, which is founding the attainment of solitude, which becomes the source from which the new, the unique images of the individual rise to enhance, differentiate, and expand the collective sphere (Hollis 2000: 94).

Mkwawa has fought the revolution and has contacted his own inhumanity (Moore and Gillette 1990: 75), however death makes him a hero (Goethals and Scott 2012: 216-217).

Mkwawa committes suicide and this act becomes his ultimate empowerment. Studies of suicide in the colonial period report that in many African communities suicide was viewed as a quintessentially "bad" death, one that denied the perpetrator a place in the spirit world of the lineage. But there were also marked variations in approach, with some groups viewing suicide not as

²⁴ Mukwawa: " ...Tumaini bado lipo. Lakini si leo, kesho. Na si kwa kizazi hiki, labda vizazi vijavyo. [...] Maadui wanaonitafuta wako karibu. Sitaki wanikute katika hali hii. Siwezi kuishi utumwani. [...] Ni bora kufa kuliko kuwa mtumwa. [...] Hapakubakia kitu chochote kwa ajili ya Mhehe. Kila kitu sasa kinauzika na kununulika kwa fedha, hata watu wanauzwa, hata ardhi inauzwa. [...] Namchukia Mzungu! [...] Nachukia utumwa huul [...] Siku inakuja ambapo watu wote weusi (...) kutoka pwani ya mashariki hadi pwani ya magharibi, wataponyanyuka kwa sauti moja kudai uhuru na ardhi yao. Siku hiyo wale watakaokuwa hai watafurahika, na mashujaa walio kuzimu watafufuka. [...] Hata sasa [...] Naweza kusikia sauti za shangwe za mashujaa hao zikiniita. Nchi yangu inaniita, NINAKWENDA! (Anajipiga risasi na kufa hapohapo) (Mulokozi 1988: 102-103). English version mine.

a crime but as an act of bravery (Vaughan 2010: 386). About the suicide as archetype, Jung states: “The secret is that only that which can destroy itself is truly alive” (Jung 1993: 74). Hillman (1978) juxtaposes the archetype of the soul with that of the individual choice of death. The archetype of suicide is summoned by the ego complex and one enters into death’s field on one’s own terms, choosing to walk directly into it:

It is the thought that my soul is mine, and so my death belongs only to me. I can do with my death what I choose. Because I can end my life when and how and where I please, I am wholly my own being, utterly self-determined (Hillman 1978: 197).

The loneliness of Mkwawa when he was abandoned by his allies in his fight against the Germans has been described in the poem *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* (‘The Death of Mkwawa’), published in 1918, written by Mwenyi Shomari bin Mwenyi Kambi and edited by Carl Velten (Miehe *et al.* 2002: 256-277):

<i>Sikilizani habari</i>	Listen to the story
<i>yake Mkwawa kabiri,</i>	of Mkwawa the Great,
<i>alishikwa na ghururi</i>	he was fell of boasting
<i>akicheza na bahari.</i>	As he played with the ocean
<i>asiwaze kufikiri</i>	He could not image
<i>bahari kitu kabiri,</i>	the ocean is a great powerful thing,
<i>muna nyingi hatari</i>	in it there are many dangers
<i>wala mtu hakadiri.</i>	No one knows many.
[...]	[...]
<i>watu wa kale waronga:</i>	the ancestors said:
<i>“bahari haiuzwi nonga;”</i>	“the ocean cannot be vanquished;”
<i>mwa Muinga kaipinga</i>	the son of Muinga opposed it
<i>azani kitu saghiri.</i>	Taking it be a small thing. (Miehe <i>et al.</i> 2002: 260).

According to Ranne (2016), the image of the sea represents the powerful Germans: their armed strength was something that Mkwawa did not comprehend but tried to win. The choice of the word for describing the power of the sea might hint to death: with a subtle change it would be *bahari kitu kaburi* ‘the ocean (is) a thing (of) grave.’ Similarly, *kabiri* resembles the word *kiburi* ‘pride, arrogance’ which furthermore supports the image of the proud Mkwawa. At the end of the poem there is a

strong advice about the need to be afraid of the ocean. The second stanza deals with death most explicitly (Ranne 2016: 90-91) :

<i>nami nawapa hazari,</i>	And I give you a warning,
<i>msichezee bahari,</i>	do not play (with) the sea,
<i>mauti yako fujari</i>	your death (will be) horrible
<i>hufa ukabusuri.</i>	you die seeing it. (Miehe et al. 2002: 276).

The heroism of Mkwawa and his soldiers is symbolically evoked by Shaaban Robert in the poem *Mkwawa* (Robert 1968: 8):

<i>Ilikuwa ni usiku kabla kupambazuka</i>	It was the time of night before sunrise ²⁵
<i>[...]</i>	<i>[...]</i>
<i>Kabla kulia kuku na umande unashuka</i>	before the rooster sang and the dew dried up
<i>Alipovipata siku Mkwawa ya kutukuka</i>	When the day came for Mkwawa to be glorified.
<i>Na kwale walipolia Wadachi wameishafika</i>	And when partridges sang the Germans had already arrived
<i>Mjini wameingia na wao wamezungukwa</i>	They entered the city surrounding them
<i>Kutoka hawana njia moja iliyofunguka</i>	since there was no way out
<i>Mkwawa hakukawia mapigano kuyashika</i>	Mkwawa immediately started the battle
<i>Kama sime na kwa mikuki na ngao</i>	Arming themselves with lance, blades and
<i>walizoshika</i>	shields
<i>Kama simba kwa hamaki Wahehe</i>	Like roaring lions, the Hehe jumped
<i>walivyoruka</i>	
<i>Wadachi wakahiliki wasipate pa kutoka</i>	the Germans were destroyed cause they could not escape
<i>Kwisha kwa kitendo hiki Mkwawa akaanguka</i>	After this event Mkwawa fell (Robert 1968: 8).

²⁵ English version mine.

Zúbková Bertoncini (1984-1985: 100-101) claims that in this poem an important role is entrusted to time. In the first stanza the darkness seems to symbolize the darkness that enveloped the Africans at that time; the dew symbolizes the cold hand of colonialism and the cock that has not yet sung is the expected political awakening. *Kabla kulia kuku na umande unashuka* “before the rooster sang and the dew dried up” makes reference to the time before dawn: the Africans responded to the call of the partridge, clashing with the Germans; miserably armed, but full of courage like lions, they manage to put the enemy in difficulty. Then, at dawn, Mkwawa falls (Zúbková Bertoncini 1984-1985: 100-101).

A realistic vision of a Mkwawa proud of his people is offered in Gonsalves’s poetry *Conqueror of Many Lands* (2014), in which the Chief introduces himself as a man and a warrior:

I am no superhuman,
just a conqueror
defending his mighty tribe

I am a tribal leader,
determined to win
for the pride of my people.

I shall die
Before alien hands
Take pride in killing me

I am no myth
Or comical hero,
but a warrior you will remember (Gonsalves 2014: 79).

Although these verses reveal the image of a man in his own perception of reality, in her poetry Gonsalves repropose the figure of the archetypal hero who fights against the enemy for the triumph of good over evil and whose life is focused on power over his life and over others (Campbell 1949). The death of Mkwawa has been conceived as heroic both in historical reality and in literary works, and acquired a mythic status. A few months before his death, the former president of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere, posted a memorial plaque near Mkwawa’s grave on the occasion of the first centenary of the chief’s death (Musso 2011: 117). Mkwawa’s myth among his people was described by Adams, who

observed that the Chief was known as a strong warrior, surrounded by supernatural powers. According to the conception of the Hehe,²⁶ he had “medicine,” which supposedly had the effect of making him intangible and invisible in battle (Adams 1899: 53-61). Nevertheless he died, and the Germans did not want to return empty handed. They beheaded him and took his head to Germany, and Bucher (2016: 284) claims that the skull of the defeated Hehe chief was a symbol of colonial authority in Tanganyika. Gaudi refers to a mysterious detail of Mkwawa’s skull: the Wahehe had thought Mkwawa immortal, because he was protected from bullets by an alliance of spirits and a magic horn that grew out of the center of his forehead. Examining the head after Mkwawa’s decapitation, the mythical horn was discovered to be a poorly-healed bullet wound (Gaudi 2017: 147). Mkwawa’s head was taken by Captain von Prince (Winans 1994: 225) who gave the skull to the Anthropological Museum in Bremen, where it laid for fifty years (Winans 1994: 225; Musso 2011: 117). In the aftermath of World War II, Sir Edward Twining, the last British Governor of Tanganyika, saw fit to heed the continuing Hehe request for the skull of their Chief. It was returned in 1954 and displayed in the museum of Kalenga, Mkwawa’s old capital, where it still remains.

3. Final remarks on the “renewed heroes” as literary trends

The figure and the history of Liongo Fumo has influenced and inspired some contemporary authors to create literary works. The play *Kifo kisimani*²⁷ (Death by the Well) by Kithaka wa Mberia (2001) is a sort of modern version of the Fumo Liongo’s epic (Zúbková Bertoncini 2010: 91). The play is set in an imaginary African society characterized by poor political leadership, corruption and violation of human rights. A modern hero created by wa Mberia is Mwelusi, who in many ways retraces the ancient Liongo’s footsteps. There are two events that make the two figures similar: the escape from the prison through the file that is passed to them inside the bread (wa Mberia 2001: 55-56), and their killing by a family member near a well.

In 2001, Matundura published a children’s book titled *Mkasa wa Shujaa Liyongo* (The tragedy of the hero Liyongo). The book resumes the story of the epic hero in twelve chapters, starting from the death of the king – itself the event which will lead to the conflict between Liongo and Mringwari –

²⁶ Concerning the the relationship between the Wahehe and ‘magic’ see Winans and Edgerton (1964).

²⁷ *Kifo Kisimani* has been performed three times: the first time in 1990 at the Coast Girls Secondary School at Mombasa, Kenya, by the Youth of Chakina (*Chama cha Kiswahili cha Chuo Kikuu cha Nairobi* – Kiswahili University Association of Nairobi); the second time in 1992, it was performed by the theater group of the *Theater Workshop Productions*, and the third time in 1998 under *the Kongamano la Tatu la Kimataifa la Michezo ya Kuigiza* (“The third National Theater Festival”), held in Kisumu, Kenya (wa Mberia 2001: iv-vi).

until Liongo's death. The text, characterized by the use of a linear prose, is an example of a literary genre finding its *raison d'être* in the representation of a traditional and cultural myth in a modern style through a contemporary tool – the pocketbook.

It is true that myths and legends are narratives of heroism whose main characters are highly revered national and/or cultural heroes; however, it is equally possible to find 'female heroes' in the same stories devoted to male heroes. An example is the trilogy *Siri Sirini: Mshairi na Mfungwa* ('Secret in the Secret: A Poet and a Prisoner;' 2014) by Rocha Chimera. The trilogy is based on Liongo's legend. In *Siri Sirini 1, Mfungwa na Mshairi* ('A Prisoner and a Poet'), the legend begins with Liongo's detention and escape to Ozi; in *Siri Sirini 2, Mpiga Mbizi Kilindini* ('A Diver in Deep Water'), the author focuses on the assassination of Mfawidi, an educated man and the minister for foreign affairs; *Siri Sirini 3, Mtihani wa Mwanamke* ('A woman's test') presents Liongo's return to Shanga and his murder by Prince Ngwari, who had been informed by Liongo himself about the only part of his body that could be mortally struck. Liongo's assassination triggers a military revolution led by Abanoye, Liongo's second wife and the chief of Ozi's daughter. According to Yenjela (2015), unlike the other historical characters who are mentioned in the trilogy – such as Mwana kupona, The Queen of Sheba and the Egyptian Queen Hatshepsut – Abanoye is only a legendary heroine (Yenjela 2015: 54). Although in *Siri Sirini 1* Abanoye has already demonstrated her ability as a warrior woman in suppressing the men who had raped her (*Siri Sirini 1*: 402), it is Liongo's assassination that triggers the revolution that will transform Abanoye into a legend.

Also Mkwawa's myth inspired other literary works: the Swahili novel *Ngome ya Mianzi* ('The Fortress of Bamboo;' 1991) by Mulokozi²⁸ is an example and retells the story of the battle of Lugalo in June 1891. Besides the historical figure of Chiefs Mkwawa, the novel uses many other fictional characters, including the protagonists: young boy Mugoha and young girl Nyawelu. The heroic acts of the two children and other Hehe soldiers allow the Hehe to win the battle. The concept of heroism is repeatedly used to refer to acts of courage and bravery performed by an individual to defend a particular cause in spite of the risks involved (Gibson *et al.* 2007). In most cases, there is a tendency to focus on the heroic acts of political leaders, military commanders and other élite figures, as in the account of the Hehe's encounter with the invading German troops, which tends to highlight Chief Mkwawa and other members of his royal family (Redmayne 1968; Iliffe 1973, 1979; Pike 1986; Crema

²⁸ According to Aiello (2015: 146), the colonial experience is dealt within other historical novels written by Mulokozi like *Ngoma ya Mianzi* ('The Dance of the Bamboos;' 1991) and *Moto wa Mianzi* ('The Fire of Bamboos;' 1996). All these works are set during the years of the Hehe resistance in 1891- 1898 and report historically true events.

1987; Musso 1968, 2011), making them sort of cultural heroes.²⁹ Still, by mediating between realism and fictional representation, between the historical recounting and interpretation of a historical world and the novelistic creation of an imaginary world, Mulokozi's novel strikes a different note by directing the reader's attention to the heroic acts of people from a lower segment of society, many of them adolescent (Sanga 2019).

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²⁹ According to Quayson (2001), the concept of a cultural hero is usually used to refer to figures who have become embodied in cultural productions such as folktales, myths, novels, plays and epics.

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