

The Mkwawa Portrait Conundrum: A Quest for Facial Similitude

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of an investigation that was carried out to determine the accuracy of the facial likeness of Paramount Chief Mkwawa to his representative portrait created in 1954, with the intent to complement the missing part of his face following the return of his skull from Germany where it had been kept for 56 years. Since its creation, the portrait sought to approximate the actual face of Mkwawa, which had been badly damaged from a gunshot wound and the ensuing maceration process by Tom von Prince before he shipped the skull to Bremen, Germany in July 1898. Since its return to the then Tanganyika, local and foreign researchers have engaged in endless debate on its authenticity while ignoring discussions on Mkwawa's facial appearance in most of their publications on the topic. Employing the Imitation Theory of Art, this paper extends the inquiry on the legitimacy of Mkwawa's skull to his portrait, created to complement the missing flesh on the skull. Data for the study had been collected using critical interviews and document review. Meanwhile, analysis entailed a comparative examination of the facial features on the original photograph of Mkwawa's head against photographs of his lineal descendants. Besides, a review was carried out of the artist's skills of portraiture and knowledge of principles of art, as well as narratives of the respondents on the portrait creation process. Findings show that the portrait depicted a striking facial resemblance to Mkwawa's descendants involved in his portrait creation process except for the spiritual aura and the imagined facial expression of the paramount Chief himself.

Keywords:

Iringa, Kalenga Mausoleum, Mkwawa, Portraiture, Tanzania, Wahehe,
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Introduction

This paper investigates how the official portrait of Chief Mkwawa was created for his commemoration in 1954 at the Kalenga Mausoleum in Iringa region. Specifically, the paper aims to ratify or reject the portrait as an accurate artistic representation of the great Wahehe

paramount chief. Thus, from its outset, the research focused on investigating and analysing the legends, historical texts, and images such as sketches, illustrations, and photographs that were used in making the official portrait of Chief Mkwawa, displayed in his mausoleum at Kalenga. Besides, documentary reviews and interviews were conducted to gather additional narratives and paraphrases missing from the document and photographs available. The investigation was guided by two main questions: To what extent does Chief Mkwawa's official portrait embody his actual facial similitude? How was Chief Mkwawa's official portrait created in 1954 without corresponding photographs or sketches, 56 years after his death? The study was guided by the Imitation Theory, a classical art postulation by Plato that provides art historians and critics with appropriate artistic lenses during vetting procedures of representational artworks such as portraits before their formal approval as artistic doppelgängers of the person or objects they embody. In this regard, an extract from Joseph Tate's article, *Plato and Imitation*, simplifies the theory to justify its adoption in the present research:

... When art was called imitation, it was ordinarily so called with reference to the merely outward and apparent resemblance between a work of art and the object represented; in fact, the greater the deception the better the art was popularly supposed..." (Tate 1939, p.162).

Tate underscores the significance of outstanding similarities between an actual subject and its archetype, as the gist of the Imitation Theory whenever it is employed in the criticism of any representational art. Apart from the background of the study, with information on the biography of Mkwawa, his resistance to German colonisation and the artistic commemoration of his heroic activities, the remaining parts of this work are covered by the following sections: Why Mkwawa's portrait facial features matter; Findings, Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation pertaining to the portrait of the Paramount Chief Mkwawa; The Creator of Chief Mkwawa's Portrait; Incongruities in the Portraiture of Chief Mkwawa; the Emergence of the Lost Photograph of Chief Mkwawa's Severed Head, and finally the Conclusion.

Portraiture Art

Traditionally, a portrait is a painting or bust artistically created as a person's representation (Borgatti 1990; Christiansen & Weppelmann 2011). Borgatti (2019, pp. 304-305) asserts that distinctive to other forms of painting art, portraiture worldwide emphasises capturing and depicting compelling facial features and the likeness of the resultant portrait to its sitter or bearer's face. Moore (2017, p.2) further contends that facial expressions are predominant in portraiture for communicating all types of stories properly. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person making and using portraits became popular during the Renaissance in Europe, particularly in Italy and the Netherlands (Woods-Marsden 2013, pp. 442). For many years, portraiture evolved but maintained its objective of depicting distinctive characteristics of individuals in their bust and full body forms. In the US, Germany, France and Spain, portraiture was adopted and practised as in Italy and the Netherlands (Gisbey 2019, pp. 16-20). Across time, methods of portraiture production and consumption in western traditions have always been the same.

Outside western traditions, portraiture emerged with trivial differences. In Asia, references are made to the 17th Century portraits of Mughal India. Koch (2018, p. 73) shows that Mughal portrait artists, unlike their western counterparts, created portraits with the intent to capture the sitter's exact likeness while also depicting his psyche, state of mind, age, social status, and ethnicity distinctly. This artistic orientation became the character of most of the South Asian portraiture practices (Branfoot 2018). The Chinese practice, on the other hand, was characterised by meticulous colourful highly individualised self-portraits of the unknown artist but also of imperial folks, and court portraits (Ching 2015). Perhaps a sophisticated portraiture tradition emerged in ancient Egypt, North Africa. Its method of production resembled that of Italy, particularly of Pompeii portraits (Cartwright 2020). Contrary to most traditions reviewed here, ancient Egyptian portraits depicted their deceased bearers and were mostly associated with funerary rituals.

Whereas in most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa portraits were dominantly in sculpture (Miller 1972, p.14), seldom were they created to depict the bearer's temperament as opposed to physiognomic likeness: "... in contrast,

African culture emphasises social identity, the African aesthetic is a generalising one, and the portrait image is individuated by name and context..." (Borgatti 1990, p. 35). In West Africa, the ancient bronze and terracotta heads excavated from areas surrounding the Gulf of Guinea and Ile Ife are evidence of the practice (Blier 2012), but the same objective was evident in East and Southern African portraits (Bortolot 2003; Makukula 2019). This part of the study shows that portraiture is one of the oldest and universal art genres that has evolved with time. However, its portrayals differ from one culture to culture, subject to concepts of individualism, the prevailing aesthetic, and a host of social or ritual beliefs particular to a given period, people, or place (Borgatti 1990, p. 35). In Tanzania, portraiture has been practised as a valued medium of creating and preserving historical personages (Makukula, 2019, pp. 374-375). Presently, portraiture is practised with the same methods of production and consumption. The hyper-realistic portrait productions worldwide are evidence of this universal art genre.

Portraiture and Historical Documentation

Before the invention of photography in the early 19th Century, a drawn, painted, or sculpted portrait was the only means to record and preserve the appearance of a personage (Tate 2017). These portraits helped to commemorate both living and dead heroes and the events around them (Bortolot 2003). Moreover, the portraiture was useful in recreating lost memories into images for historical restoration when nothing about an incident or event was available, as Borgatti explains: "...It was accepted without question in the court circles of sixteenth-century Europe that one of the chief functions of art was to serve as a 'weapon' against oblivion" (Borgatti 2019, p. 303).

Several researchers have validated Borgatti's view. In this regard, Suh (2013) asserts that cultural and social historians have always used artworks as historical evidence. Similarly, Soetan and Osadola (2018) confirm art's efficacy in historical preservation. The accounts of Ellen Milles on the historic portraitures created to commemorate the scenes and heroes of the war between the British and Americans against the French in which Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, was captured in 1745 (Miles 1983, p. 49), and Napoleon's heroic portraits created between 1799 and 1815 (Chalençon

2007) confirm the power of portraiture in history recreation and conservation.

In Tanzania, the National Museum's permanent display contains several portraits that preserve the rich history of the country's leadership transition from colonial times to-date (Makukula 2019). During the present research at the Mkwawa Memorial Museum, Chief Mkwawa's and his son Sapi's portraits were found hanging facing each other as historical objects. When considering Mathij and Mosselman (2000, p. 61) claim that the representation of reality requires historical consideration. This research concurs with Wango (2020) on the contention that with the power to recreate the lost and past narratives into visual and tangible artifacts, portraiture will always serve as the best medium for historical restoration and preservation (Makukula 2022).

Scarcity of Literature on Mkwawa's Images

This study found scarce literature on the images depicting Chief Mkwawa. The earliest studies aimed to depict Mkwawa's personality were carried out by Tom von Prince in 1914 after one by his wife, Magdalene, in 1908. Both had neither photographs nor illustrations of Mkwawa, but the couple were the first and only Europeans to take the first and last photograph(s) when his decapitated head was presented to them by Sergeant Major Merkl (Prince 1908; Winans 1994; Baer & Schröter 2001).¹ Magdalene von Prince's

¹ Magdalene von Prince's diary notes, which were the central reference in almost all the studies reviewed in this section, should not be treated as a canonical text, and similarly all she had kept and revealed. Brockmeyer et al. (2020) show that Magdalene concealed that her husband extracted and kept Mkwawa's molar as a trophy. Garsha (2019) confirms that von Prince's family kept the tooth of Mkwawa. This should be a hint that, perhaps, the Princes keep more of Mkwawa's relics, including photographs than a few they have recently revealed and returned to Mkwawa's descendants. Winan (1994) claims that Tom von Prince, who had dreams of a strong German colony in Tanganyika for many years to come after Mkwawa's demise, desired to wipe away everything about Mkwawa and his family to prevent the Wahehe and other ethnic groups in Tanzania from immortalising their revered leader and, of course, follow his example, something that will deter the progress of German colonialists' interests, thus concealed and destroyed lots of things connected to Mkwawa and his ancestors (Winans 1994).

Clinical portrayals of Mkwawa's appearance (Prince 1908, pp.179-181) quoted in Alison Redmayne's article, *Mkwawa and the Hehe Wars*, briefly provide a general appearance of Mkwawa's physique and partial description of his facial features without any images (Redmayne 1968). Similarly, Michael Musso's book published in 1987 and reprinted in 2011, skimpily describes Mkwawa's facial expression in a paragraph of only eight lines (Musso, 2011:120). Winans (1994) also briefly repeated Magdalene's descriptions. Nevertheless, Musso's portrayal suggests Mkwawa's emotional state and not necessarily provide distinctive facial features. Michael Baer and Olaf Schröter's book released in 2001 and Jeremiah Garsha's dissertation published online in 2019 provide a lengthy explanation of Mkwawa's image, particularly detailed accounts of the appearance of his decapitated head when it was presented to Tom von Prince and his wife. Perhaps, these are the only studies before the present research, which incorporated a photograph depicting the severed head of Mkwawa after more than 100 years since it was taken (Figure 7). Nonetheless, these two depictions of Mkwawa also exhausted his general physique and height descriptions. Like several others before them, Garsha, Baer, and Schröter also dwelled on Magdalene's descriptions of Mkwawa's severed head as a political trophy and an ethnological object. A closer review of Baer and Schröter's (2001) and Garsha's (2019) discussions reveal that Mkwawa's severed head photograph as a shred of indisputable evidence to mark his demise but neither exhaust facial appearance depictions for a wider understanding of his personality nor present it for his proper commemoration. Implicitly, before the present study, it appears there has never been a study that had conducted to search for and reveal images depicting the actual facial appearance of Chief Mkwawa.

The paucity of literature on Mkwawa's image is a fraction of the huge amount of information missing due to several factors. Alison Redmayne asserts that much of the missing information on the Wahehe, Mkwawa's ethnic group, was caused by the inexorable battle between the British and German colonialists within Tanganyika and in their respective homelands where each stash is inaccessible, and unshared among them. The following excerpt shades light on the problem:

British historians and anthropologists have done little work on the sources of the German period in Tanganyika and it seems that since the end of the first world war German historians have also done very little* In the years immediately preceding the Second World War, a few German and British writers produced books and pamphlets all showing why each author's nation was best fitted to rule Tanganyika. This lack of standard works on the German conquest and administration makes it difficult to obtain good general knowledge of the political and administrative background of the development of Wahehe social and political organization, but the most important developments can be outlined with sufficient accuracy for the present purpose (Redmayne 1964, pp. 203-204).

Besides Redmayne's views, Desplat (2019) attaches several documents showing that Germans deliberately avoided and complicated exchange of information about the skull of Mkwawa when the British pioneered its restoration (on behalf of Chief Adam Sapi I who represented the Wahehe polity) as stipulated in Article 246 of the Treaty of Versailles. Attachments coded [FO 608/215](#), [FO 371/3795](#), [CO 691/124/2](#), and [CO 691/124/2](#) show several British written requests and German denial and failed efforts to comply with the requests. Furthermore, following scarcity of either already established literature on Mkwawa's identity or future publications due to lack of background information, Brockmeyer et al. (2020, p.5) claim that German's noncompliance with the British on matters concerning Mkwawa's relics restoration was meant to prevent a psychological defeat following results of wars involving their respective nations. However, since neither a member of Mkwawa's family nor the public has contested or commented on the legitimacy of the face depicted in the portrait as Chief Mkwawa's, it shows the gross deficit of images and literature on Chief Mkwawa's face records for reference purposes in Tanzania particularly.

Why Mkwawa's Facial Features Matter

Until the present study, the dominant discussion on the identity of Chief Mkwawa revolves around the hunt and authentication of his skull, which upon his beheading, was macerated and transferred to Bremen in Germany at the end of 1898 (Redmayne 1964; Winans 1994; Garsha 2019; Le Gall & Mboro 2019). Besides, the debate on Mkwawa's skull, there has never been a study specifically conducted to describe other components comprising Mkwawa's facial appearance even though a portrait depicting his supposed

facial appearance was created in 1954. Even a study published after the portrait was created, but also two other publications revealing a photograph depicting Mkwawa's decapitated head, Brockmeyer et al. (2020) extend the recurring scholarship fad on Mkwawa's identity by unveiling deficiencies in most previous studies on the subject, thereby revealing strengths and weaknesses in their essence and calling for further studies to authenticate Mkwawa's skull.

During their research for their recently published article, Brockmeyer et al. (2020) took photographs of Mkwawa's skull in a case underneath his hanging portrait on the wall behind it, as well as citing several sections from Baer and Schröter (2001) whose book published Chief Mkwawa's severed head photograph for the first time in their attempt to reveal his actual facial appearance. However, Brockmeyer et al. (2020) neither acknowledged nor discussed Mkwawa's portrait and a photograph depicting Mkwawa's facial appearance. On this omission, the current research extends the debate on Mkwawa's identity not only by looking at his skull but also by adding a face to it. Thus, this study aimed at collecting and examining the similitude of descriptions, sketches, illustrations, and photographs depicting Mkwawa to the official portrait created and deposited in the Mkwawa Museum at Kalenga, Iringa, to portray and commemorate his face in 1954.

Portrait of the Paramount Chief Mkwawa

Among several historical objects preserved and displayed in the small museum within the Kalenga mausoleum, is a portrait displaying the supposed facial appearance of the paramount chief of Wahehe, Mkwavinyika Munyigumba Mwamuyinga during his prime between 1891 and 1898 (see Figure 1). The current research found that the portrait was created by Dorothy Kingdon from February to early June 1954. It was commissioned by Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I to serve as a complementary object next to Mkwawa's skull during its first appearance in the Kalenga museum on 19th June 1954 (*Tanganyika Standard* 1954, p. 8).



Figure 1: Paramount Chief Mkwavinyika or “Mkwawa”

Source: Courtesy of the Kalenga Museum conservator, 17 August 2022

The section of the portrait in the ongoing analysis (Figure 1) was cropped from its original wood-framed picture to enhance the visibility of the facial features as subject matter, as well as enable its detailed analysis. Currently, the portrait hangs on the wall behind the casket containing Chief Mkwawa’s skull in the Kalenga museum (Figure 3).

The 60x60 square centimetre portrait is painted on a linen canvas using oil colours (*Tanganyika Standard*, 1954, p. 8). The analysis shows that oil colours were suitable for their long-lasting quality with excellent shade and tinting effects when used thickly or thinly to a very fine glaze. The colour quality also helped to preserve the portrait’s novel quality while enabling the artist to capture all the necessary details, which suggest Chief Mkwawa’s dominant warlike mood, as perceived by most who have only read and heard about his exploits (Achebe, 1975). The linen canvas on which the portrait is painted is versatile, unlike hardboard, which is rigid and prone to warping over time, but also the rotting of oil paints on it. A good choice and combination of quality art media during the making of the portrait had helped to prevent cracks in the paint layers for almost seven decades.

The artist's impeccable knowledge of African man's anatomy and her sketching and painting skills enabled her to produce a masterpiece in both form and realistic impressions. The figure is boldly portrayed, neatly dressed in a white toga covering the torso from the left shoulder and a turban covering most of the crown of the head, holding a spear in the right hand and standing in front of the mighty *Musosa*, the oldest tree still standing within the Kalenga mausoleum site. The portrait depicts Chief Mkwawa as an energetic hero, wearing a courageous glare, suggesting utmost resistance to his German aggressor (Musso 2011; Desplat 2019).

The deep hazelnut skin-colour complexion² has been skilfully applied with occasional shade and light strokes put on some sinking and protruding facial features such as the forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, lips, and chin to help enhance a sense of reality in the depicted time, the mood of the subject and the scenery of the portrait. Chief Mkwawa's oval face is characterised by a flat-wide forehead with his deep-set eyes' gaze fixed on his front. His nose is portrayed as a Roman type (Shamil 2017), suggesting Mkwawa's great organisational skills as well as his seldom aggressive character (Musso 2011). It is seen with an over-projected straight shape characterised by a highlighted bridge with a narrow tip, wide nostrils, and a thin base. His fairly sized lips are depicted in a closed normal position. In this portrait, Chief Mkwawa is highlighted with a rather protruding shallowly crinkled chin. Its tiny growing goatee is finely put likewise a moustache in black hatched brush strokes. Mkwawa's cheekbones and jaws are depicted as normal without any suggestive facial peculiarities. Overall, Chief Mkwawa's facial appearance is portrayed to be as much photographic as possible with a compelling facial resemblance to his grandson, Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I, who was alive at the time of creating the portrait.

Chief Mkwawa's portrait was mainly created to show and preserve his actual facial appearance, an important missing component in all ever-told Mkwawa's narratives. Malangalila (1987) and Musso (2011) are, probably, the only local studies on Mkwawa that have incorporated images representing his facial appearance but without sufficiently describing the images. Moreover, it emerged during the analysis of the portrait that, either

² Several historians assert that Chief Mkwawa has a mixed origin. His father was not a native Mhehe of Iringa as Mkwawa's grandfather was believed to be a hunter from far Eastern Africa in areas currently known as Sudan and Ethiopia.

knowingly or by chance, the artist recreated and preserved more than Chief Mkwawa's face.

Apart from Mkwawa's image, she added two more components to the portrait that helped to narrate and preserve significant information on Chief Mkwawa's story. First, Mkwawa's cotton fabric attire which comprises his white turban, neatly wrapped onto the head, and a white toga, loosely draped on his left shoulder for the rest of the body, revealed both his newly-acquired Islam belief and Swahili dressing culture, which were hardly documented in numerous publications on Mkwawa (Malangalila 1987; El-Hema 2012; Garsha 2018). According to Redmayne (1964, 1968), Mkwawa and the entire Uhehe territory were subjected to early influences from the Arabian and Swahili cultures, including the acquisition and use of guns in his warfare. These influences were attained through contacts with Arab traders in the early 1870s and help to explain the complex heritage of religious affiliations adopted among Chief Mkwawa's direct descendants such as his son Sapi and grandson Adam Sapi Mkwawa I who were devout Muslims regardless of their close ties with both German and British missionaries, while a section of Mkwawa's clan is made of different Christian denominations (Malangalila, 1987; Musso, 2011; El-Hema, 2012). The reigning Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa II (Figure 2), like his forefathers, is a devout Muslim, whose personality in posture and attire in his several official portraits has emulated his great grandfather, the paramount Chief Mkwawa, as recreated in his portrait (Figure 1). Presently, the Wahehe polity embraces much of the Swahili culture which appears to subdue the rigid old Wahehe traditions.



Figure 2: Portrait of Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa II in his Official Attire
(Source: Courtesy of the Mkwawa Family, August 2022)

Secondly, the *Musosa* tree behind the portrait presents significant symbolism for the Kalenga mausoleum site as Wahehe's spiritual and political headquarters. According to Musso (2011), Chief Mkwawa chose the Kalenga, or "Kwilenga" in Kihehe, as an ideal site for his fort because of its strategic security location, richness in water sources, and unique vegetation including gigantic sacred trees such as the *Musosa* trees under which the Wahehe have performed rituals and offerings to *Nguluvi* [the Wahehe God] since prehistoric times (Gerald Malangalila, Phone Interview, 28 August 2022). According to Eric Jordan, Mkwawa's museum conservator at Kalenga, the *Musosa* tree in the portrait is probably the one located a few metres outside the mausoleum's fence near Musengele Sapi's grave (Malangalila, 1987). This sacred tree is revered and engaged by the descendants of Chief Mkwawa in invoking their ancestors (Crema 1987, p.149). This particular *Musosa* tree dates back to more than 100 years, to Chief Mkwawa's life days (Malangalila 1987, p. 63).

Subsequently, Mkwawa's portrait assumes values beyond those of a mere work of art hence befitting an integral historical artefact to be fully drafted into the narratives of Chief Mkwawa. Nevertheless, until the present research, Chief Mkwawa's portrait has not been among the listed objects in the official collection of the Mkwawa memorial museum. Between 1980 and 2020, two more Mkwawa portraits were reproduced from the original (Figure1). The first replica was painted in 1981 by Philip Neri Ndunguru, a pioneer Tanzanian comic artist from the late 1970s until 1986, when he died. It was commissioned by John Lamba, a.k.a "Magoma-Moto" a Tanzanian tycoon of Asian descent born in Iringa and a distant relative to Mkwawa's family. A second copy was painted between 1995 and 2010 by an unknown artist (whose signature appears on the bottom right corner of the portrait). This copy was commissioned by Chief Adam Sapi's grandchildren including the current reigning chief, who has been severally photographed beside it.



Figure 3: A photograph of Chief Adam Sapi I standing beside a case containing Mkwawa's skull at the Kalenga mausoleum on 19 June 1954. It also captures the bottom side of the frame of Mkwawa's portrait seen on the wall on top of the curved window behind Mkwawa's skull case [catalogue reference: CO 1069/159]

Source: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-skull-of-sultan-mkwawa/> 30.08.2022)

This portrait is a family private collection. The present research found that the two replica portraits simultaneously serve as original copies. The use of the second replica on Michael Musso's book cover also attests to this copyright anomaly.

The Creator of Chief Mkwawa's Portrait

The puzzle of the artist who created the portrait of Chief Mkwawa was primarily posed by the artist's ambiguous signature written in pencil at the bottom right corner of the portrait. It is written in only two initials of the artist's name followed by a line drawn after the last letter - "D.K--". Besides the signature, there is neither additional information about the artist and the year when the portrait was created nor a description of the portrait's content. This information is based on the researcher's observation during his visit to the Mkwawa memorial mausoleum on 17th July 2022. Initially, the search for the artist who painted Mkwawa's portrait began in March 2022, when the researcher contacted the Tanzania Arts and Crafts Federation (TAFCA) for further information about the portrait, though this approach was not productive. However, a document analysis carried out afterwards yielded crucial information about the painter behind Mkwawa's portrait, despite confusion ensuing in the records.

A local publication by Michael Musso in 1987 later edited and republished by David Ngassapa (2011), declares Mrs. Kingdom-Hopkins as the artist who created Chief Mkwawa's portrait for the first time and displayed it in Mkwawa's memorial museum on 19th June 1954, when the mausoleum was inaugurated (Musso 2011, p.120). Eight years later, an online post by Desplat (2019) published in the National Archives of UK BlogSpot indicated Mrs. B. Kingdon as the painter of Mkwawa's portrait. This information is captioned below a photograph of the portrait, attached to Desplat's post (Figure 4). In their presentation of the artist's name, both Musso (2011) and Desplat (2019) differ because, as it seems, Mrs. Kingdom-Hopkins and Mrs. B. Kingdon may be different persons.

However, in the coverage of Chief Mkwawa's skull restoration ceremonies at Kalenga on 19th June 1954, the day that also saw the display of Mkwawa's

portrait, the *Tanganyika Mamboleo* (TM) No. 560, dated August 1954, a monthly newsletter and the *Tanganyika Standard* (TS) dated 25 June 1954, a weekly newspaper, both published by the colonial Public Relations Department in Dar es Salaam, named Mrs. Dorothy Kingdon as the painter of Chief Mkwawa's portrait (TM 1954, p.117; TS 1954, p.5). Their revelation also appeared as a caption underneath the photograph of Mkwawa's portrait taken by J. Mitchell Hedges during the mausoleum's inauguration event (TS 1954:8). This same photograph (Figure 3) was printed in the two papers mentioned earlier.

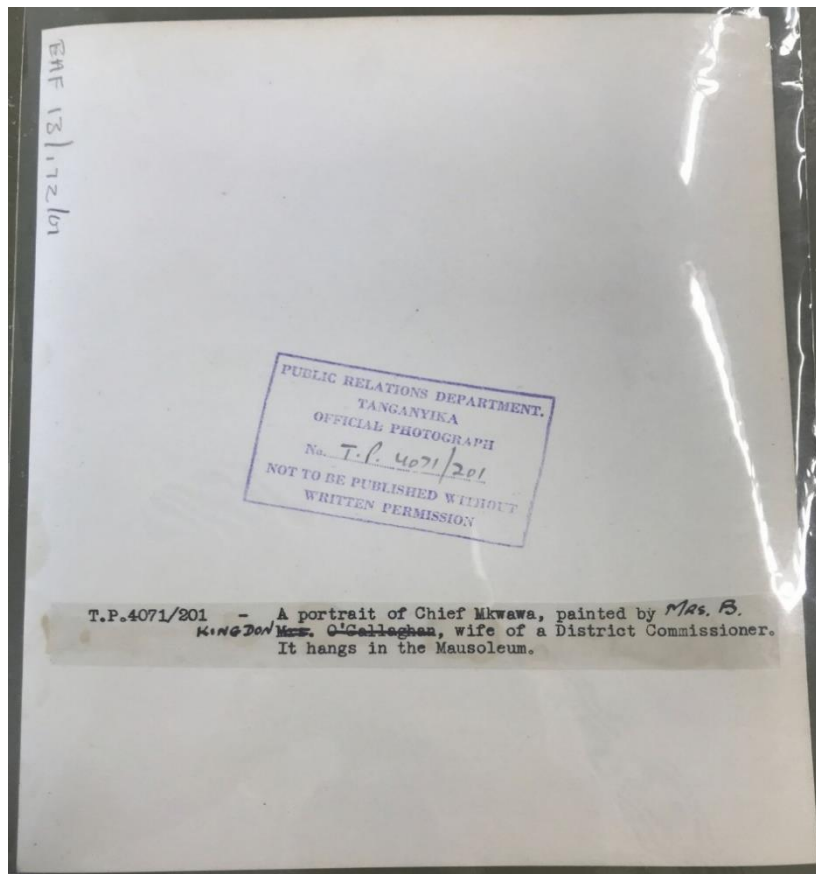


Figure 4: Backside of the Official Photograph of Mkwawa's Portrait Showing the Artist's Name

Source: Courtesy of Dr. Juliette Desplat, National Archives-UK to the researcher)

Mrs. Dorothy Kingdon was the wife of Teddy Kingdon, a former colonial District Officer in Mbeya, Iringa, and Tabora regions from early 1930s to the late 1950s (Langford 2001, pp. 17-45). Peter Hopkins and Denis O'Callaghan whose wives' names appear in Musso's (2011) and Desplat's (2019) records of the artist behind Mkwawa's portrait, were also British colonial service persons who had worked with Teddy in Tanganyika, particularly in Mbeya and Iringa regions (Langford 1954, p. 218). According to Michael Langford, Mrs. Dorothy Kingdon was one of the best artists professionally engaged in painting landscapes and portraits throughout her husband's tenure in Tanganyika as purported here: "Dorothy Kingdon was one of many very gifted artists, most of them women, who found the time to paint landscapes of Tanganyika or portraits of its citizens" (Langford 2001, p.17). Langford's (2001) quotation strengthens the possibility that Mrs. Kingdon was the actual painter of Mkwawa's portrait.

Besides, of the three names of artists associated with Mkwawa's portrait, only Mrs. Dorothy Kingdon bears similar initials (D.K.) that appear in the signature on the portrait. Nevertheless, in the quest to confirm and close the discussion on Kingdon as the artist behind Chief Mkwawa's portrait, the researcher e-mailed Juliette Desplat, the curator at National Archives-UK, whose mention of the artist was close to accurate but for the initial of first name, a 'B' instead of 'D' for Dorothy. In her reply, Desplat (2022) confirmed that Mr. Kingdon was the right painter and corrected her information published online (see Desplat 2019). Lastly, the inquiry e-mail exchanges between the researcher and Jonathan Kingdon, a son of Dorothy Kingdon (Langford, 2001) confirmed the identity of the artist behind Mkwawa's portrait. In his long e-mail reply written in Kiswahili, Jonathan confirmed that in 1954 his mother was commissioned by Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I to paint the great Chief Mkwawa's portrait. Upon collecting oral information from a section of the Wahehe elders who knew Mkwawa's family, as well as photographs of Chief Mkwawa's heirs, Mrs. Kingdon painted the portrait with Adam Sapi Mkwawa I as a sitter to aid her imagination in the portraiture process (Kingdon 2022). This compelling evidence from such sources helped the present study to establish that Dorothy Kingdon was the artist who created Chief Mkwawa's portrait.

Incongruities in the Portraiture of Chief Mkwawa

The demise of the paramount Chief Mkwawa was followed by the brutal desecration of his corpse. Most of the research confirms that a few moments after his death, Mkwawa's head was decapitated and transferred to Bremen in German (Nigmann 1908; Prince 1914; Redmayne 1964; Malangalila 1987; Winans 1994; Musso 2011; Baer & Schröter 2001; Le Gall & Mboro 2019). In recent publications, Garsha (2019) and Brockmeyer et al. (2020) contend that upon receiving Mkwawa's decapitated head at the Iringa Boma, Tom von Prince³ extracted one of Mkwawa's molar teeth and kept it as a trophy. Desplat (2019) reports that Mkwawa's head was macerated to prepare its skull before it was shipped to Germany. These extended desecrations suggest that several parts of Mkwawa's face were badly damaged beyond recognition, especially on the right side of the face (Garsha 2019, pp. 68-69). In addition, as there is no record showing that Chief Mkwawa met in person with Europeans who wandered in his territory during his reign, neither a photograph nor a drawing of his face was made before his death.

The puzzle about Mkwawa's actual facial identity continued even after his death. Legend among the Wahehe folks and several of Chief Mkwawa's descendants⁴ has it that throughout his adult life as a ruler, nobody could confidently declare that they knew the paramount chief Mkwawa and be able to identify him by his face out of the crowd (Le Gall & Mboro 2019, pp. 46-49). A similar claim was professed by Alison Redmayne, who reports that when Tom von Prince and his troops attacked Kalenga on 30th October 1894, Mkwawa managed to escape unharmed because neither von Prince nor his soldiers knew what he looked like (Redmayne 1964). This information poses challenges to the process of searching, retrieving, or reconstructing Chief Mkwawa's facial appearance. Nevertheless, Chief Mkwawa's portrait was created to depict his unharmed face for his commemoration in 1954. During the analysis of the portrait, the present research found that the process overlooked several integral procedures that

³ Tom von Prince was a German colonial and military officer and an in-charge of the campaign against Chief Mkwawa's resistance after the defeat and death of General Emil von Zelewiski in 1891. Von Prince made it his mission to hunt and kill Chief Mkwawa as his top objective since his assignment at Iringa until 1898 when Mkwawa committed suicide.

⁴ Serafino Liduino is a member of the Mkwawa family who shared the myth of Mkwawa's unknown identity to his Wahehe's subjects in Le Gall and Mboro's research in 2019.

made Mkwawa's portrait fail to portray the true image of the bearer, but that of his grandson, Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I.

In the assessment of any successful artwork, James Carney asserts that art values can be adopted for assessment. He argues that of many artwork's values, including historical, functional, and aesthetic-based values on the essence and objective of creation, none of the values is singly sufficient or any better than the other in the vetting process of artwork (Carney 1994, p.13). Besides Carney's views, the present research also adopted objective analysis and formalism models associated with imitation theory, which involves comparisons in key features depicted in a resultant artwork against those in the actual model. Particularly, this analysis is based on Mkwawa's portrait facial features against the faces of the salvaged images of the portrait's bearer as well as those of the model or the sitter as seen in figures 1 and 4, also figures 5, and 6 which depict a profile section of Mkwawa's face as well as that of his son, Sapi.

Musso (2011) and Kingdon (2022) argue that the face of Chief Mkwawa in the portrait was created based on research findings involving Wahehe elders' accounts of Mkwawa's facial appearance and the imitation technique of artistic creation of facial likeness which then involved the only living lineal descendant of Chief Mkwawa, Adam Sapi Mkwawa I as the sitter (Musso, 2011:120). However, this analysis shows that in Mkwawa's portraiture, the artist emphasised the facial features of the sitter more than the descriptions of his father and grandfather in the highlighted parts, **A**, **B**, **C**, and **D**, confirming the artist's emphasis on the imitation principles and skills in the creation of the portrait. Although the photograph of Adam Sapi I (the first figure from the left in Figure 5) was taken a few months later, after the portrait was created, the similarities in details on highlighted parts are very strong to ignore. The shades around the eyes in parts **A** and **B** are comparable and so are the replicating tips of the nose from their extended flat ridges, marked **C** in Figure 5. Likenesses of the shallow curve on the right of the lower lip parts marked **D** emphasises the strong similarity of the parts in the images. The shades and light pattern on unmarked cheeks, also the chins which are marked **E** in Figure 5 present evidence of a skilfully executed work of imitation in the portrait (Figures 1 and 5).

Despite the striking facial resemblance depicted between Adam Sapi Mkwawa I and his grandfather in the portrait, the legitimacy of the portrait

as an exact representation of the Paramount Chief Mkwawa was never disputed by members of the Mkwawa family. The current research found three reasons to attest to this situation. First, Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I played a central role in the creation and authentication of Mkwawa's portrait as a 'vulgate' representation of his grandfather's image (Musso 2011). This was a strong factor to deter any disagreements among his subjects since the decision to make the portrait of the paramount chief was made by the reigning Chief of the Wahehe. Since the Wahehe remain loyal to their customary authority, it is unlikely the Chief's decision can be challenged (Malangalila 1987; Musso 2011).

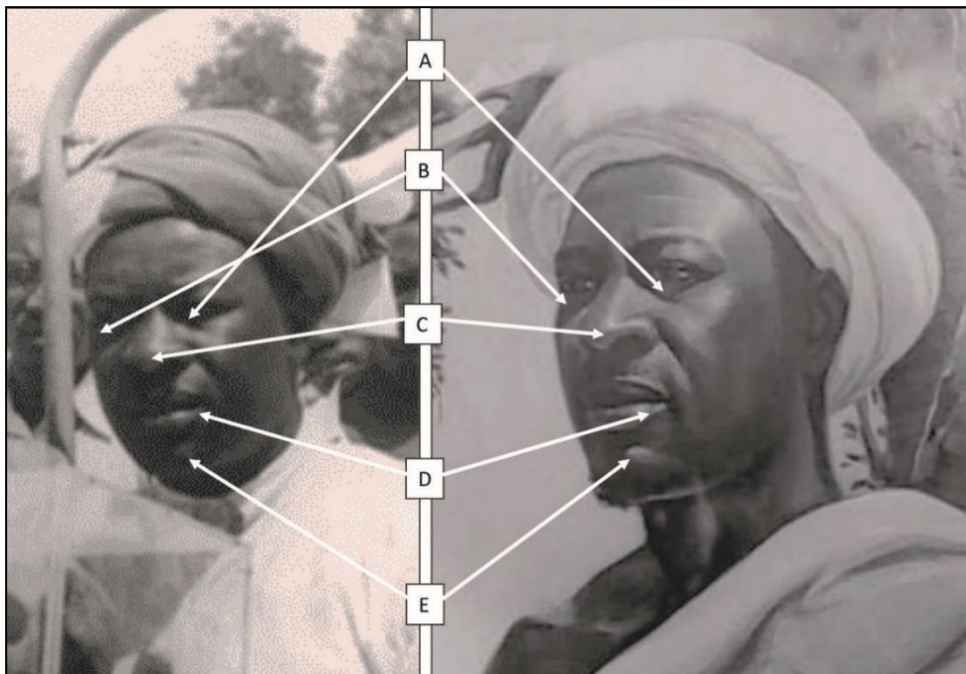


Figure 5: Photographs of Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I on the Left, and a Portrait of Mkwawa on the Right [catalog references: CO 1069/159 and CO 822/770]

(Source: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-skull-of-sultan-mkwawa/> 19.06.2022)

Secondly, a previously established belief that Adam Sapi Mkwawa I's head measurements were like those of his grandfather, the Paramount Chief Mkwawa cleared the way for the acceptance of the portrait among most of the Wahehe's folk (Langford 2001). Thirdly, lack of Chief Mkwawa's visual

referents other than his living grandson helped to prevent criticism of the dominance of Adam Sapi's facial features in his grandfather's portrait. Nonetheless, this analysis suggests that the artist's use of Adam Sapi Mkwawa I as a sitter during the making of Mkwawa's portrait (Figure1) has largely misled facial identity case in the portrait. The artist should have put her imitation emphasis on Mkwawa's son's facial features, Sapi's face, rather than on a grandson. Ignoring Sapi as a reference in the recreation of his father's image poses a lot of questions regarding the Mkwawa portrait-making process.



Figure 6: Chief Sapi Mkwawa, the son of Paramount Chief Mkwawa
Source: Malangalila (1987, p. 67).

These research findings suggest that Adam Sapi Mkwawa I's intimate and poignant relationship with his grandfather's legacy was, probably, the cause of much of what ensued in Chief Mkwawa's portraiture process. Perhaps Mrs. Kingdon, knew of this anomaly but continued with the portraiture process for a reason the present researcher could not ascertain. In an article titled *The Portraiture of an Imaginary Beloved*, Trapp (2001, pp. 56-59) discusses no criticism against the resultant portrait of Laura, which

was an embodiment of an imaginary face of a mythical character in Petrarch's prose. Moreover, Laura's portraiture did not involve a sitter to provide the artist with a reference but the descriptions of the writer. Laura's portrait could have faced criticism had she been a real person as in the case of Chief Mkwawa.

Nonetheless, had the artist chosen to emphasise Mkwawa's depiction from oral descriptions alone, the challenge would have been on the ability and accuracy of the describer in substantiating facial descriptions of Mkwawa's face seen 56 years before the portrait was created. Redmayne's description of Mkwawa's face gathered in her findings informs the ongoing analysis of the oral description challenges that an artist, who is to interpret the descriptions into visuals as evident, can encounter: "He was not particularly tall, nor was he as good-looking as Mpangile, but he was strong and fairly striking with his protruding forehead, and he was a man to be feared..." (Redmayne 1968, p. 433). Redmayne's description of Mkwawa, which appeared 14 years after the portrait was created, contests the depiction of Mkwawa's facial appearance (Figure 1), which is agreeably a handsome African man, but for the expressions it portrays.

Redmayne's imagination of Mkwawa's facial appearance is shared by Chinua Achebe a prominent Nigerian novelist whose masterpiece titled *Things Fall Apart* (1959) seemed to emulate the legend of Chief Mkwawa's suicide, who upon visiting the Iringa Boma in 1964 and, personally, meeting Chief Adam Sapi Mkwawa I, doubted not only the likeness of his facial and physical attributes but also the calibre of Adam Sapi Mkwawa I to that of his grandfather, the Paramount Chief Mkwawa when he commented, "Adam Sapi does not look at all warlike..." (Achebe 1975, p.112). This analysis presents and adds reasonable doubt that Chief Mkwawa's facial depiction in the portrait should not be considered as his vulgate artistic representation.

Emergence of the Lost Photograph of Chief Mkwawa's Severed Head

Even though the debate on the authenticity of the skull of Mkwawa still rages on academic platforms worldwide, the quest for the actual facial identity of Mkwawa is even much more complicated. The photograph depicting a freshly-severed head of Mkwawa (Figure 7) appeared on page 193 in a book titled *Eine Kopffagd - Deutsche in Ostafrika* by Martin Baer and Olaf Schröter, published in 2001. The original caption of the photograph

reads, *Diese Aufnahme des abgeschlagenen kopfes von Mkwawa fertigte Tom von Prince im juli 1898 an. Sie galt bis vor kurzer Zeit als verschollen* (Baer & Schröter 2001, p.193), which translates into English as: *This photograph of Mkwawa's severed head was taken by Tom von Prince in July 1898. The photograph was considered missing until it was discovered recently* (my translation). The same photograph was published in Jeremiah Garsha's doctoral thesis, *The Head of Chief Mkwawa and the Transnational History of Colonial Violence, 1898-2019* published online in 2019. For unknown reasons, the news of the presence of a photograph depicting a section of Chief Mkwawa's face was neither publicly announced nor accessed in Tanzania. Nevertheless, a publication by Le Gall and Mboro (2019) vaguely hinted that some members of the Mkwawa family knew of its existence.



Figure 7: Severed Head of Chief Mkwawa a Few Moments after being Cut and Photographed by Tom von Prince on July 19, 1898, at the Iringa
Source: Baer and Schröter (2001, p.193)

The photograph elaborately captures the profile impression of Mkwawa's severed head and depicts its African origin with features consistent with descriptions by Prince (1908). Garsha (2019) asserts that the profile impression was correct on the left side but the right part of the head had been badly damaged by bullet wounds. The current research could not establish what happened to either hair or parts of the scalp on the crown section of the severed head of Mkwawa as it seems to be either cleanly cut off and removed from the rest of the head or rearranged during

photographing (see Figure 7). There is an indefinite faint-dark line across the upper part of the head underneath a shadow on top of the forehead, marking its end.

At the beginning of the front top of the head, an artificial forelock protrudes on top of the aforementioned dark line and sinks in right at the beginning of the head crown joining the tuft-like hairs growing high from the crown to the back side of the head. Perhaps, the line and protruding parts suggest possibilities of doctoring in the photograph. The facial features captured in the photograph distinctly depict Mkwawa senior with a more compelling likeness to those in his son, Sapi Mkwawa's face (Figure 6) than those depicted in his portrait (Figure 1). Mkwawa's head in the photograph (Figure 7) seems to be slightly triangular with sticking-out jaws, high cheekbones, and a small set of sunk-in eyes apart from each other. The fairly-sized eye bags seen under his closed eyes are similar to those of Sapi as depicted in Figure 6. Sapi's long bridged nose between the widely set apart cheeks may resemble the facial shape of his father when his photograph (Figure 7) is flipped to depict a frontal view. Unlike in the portrait (Figure 1), Mkwawa's nose has a narrow sharp hump protruding shortly from where it is detached from the forehead. The short crease and strong chin depicted in Figures 5 and 6 differ from that in the portrait (Figure 1).

Magdalene von Prince perceived Mkwawa's prominent chin added to his scary look and suggests his strength (Garsha 2019). Mkwawa's face in the photograph depicts his face as gaunt, accentuated by sticking out cheekbones and pale skin complexion even in greyscale. This is probably due to starvation while in hiding from the Schutztruppe, who hunted him for four years before his demise (Redmayne 1964, p. 214). He wears a poker-faced gaze confirming his suicide, as he wasn't surprised as he took his own life. The emergence of Mkwawa's photograph changes the direction of discussion about his facial identity, thereby provoking further research and projects on the topic.

The skull, a portrait, and a photograph of Chief Mkwawa provide descendants of Mkwawa and Tanzanians with three crucial historic relics that will help solve the recurring puzzle of Mkwawa's actual facial appearance. Successful reconstruction of King Richard III's portrait through 3D printing technology by using his skull remains has rekindled hope for

the identification of many unknown faces on skulls kept in museums and storage. Besides, the study by Xu et al. (2014) presents and extends possibilities for enhancing and improving the visibility and clarity of damaged images. The new technologies present opportunities for the salvaged profile photograph of Mkwawa's severed head to be improved, to recreate Mkwawa's face with tolerable variations in depicting his face.

Conclusion

The findings show that the portrait of Mkwawa depicts a strong social identity and aesthetical impression of the greatest Wahehe warrior and Paramount Chief who later became the symbol of Tanganyika's early resistance to German colonialism at the end of the 19th Century. Its creator, Mrs. Kingdon, has delivered a mastery artistic portrayal of Mkwawa's temperament that is, undeniably, the most popular yet unappreciated historical artwork in Tanzania. Her execution of perfect anatomical features coupled with the skills to apply realistic facial colour tones is so well-blended that the portrait looks explicitly natural and alive. For almost seven decades since its creation, Mkwawa's portrait has complemented the missing flesh of his skull's face and made an iconic Mkwawa representation. However, after examining descriptions of Mkwawa's facial appearance vis-a-vis the actual photograph of Mkwawa and the procedure followed in the creation of the portrait, the findings show that the portrait depicts a compelling physiognomic likeness of the sitter, Adam Sapi Mkwawa I, who modelled on behalf of the portrait bearer, the paramount Chief Mkwawa, who had died 56 years before the portrait was made. Following the comparative analysis of the newly-revealed Mkwawa's, his son Sapi's, and grandson, Adam Sapi Mkwawa I's photographs as seen in Figures 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7, the portrait will always remain true to its artistic representation of the Wahehe's imagined Mkwawa's facial expression during his wars against German colonialism and an allusion to his physiognomic likeness.

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