

# A Mythical Recreation of Nyerere and the Lake Nyasa Conflict in Banyakyusa Narratives

*Ignas Fedeo\**

## Abstract

For decades, Tanzania and Malawi have been discordant over Lake Nyasa border. Apart from its colonial history, the conflict became stiff in the post-colonial era, especially between 1967 and 1968 when Tanzania under Nyerere officially submitted to Malawi their intention to rectify the border line from eastern shoreline of the lake to the middle. This article examines the 1967-1968 phase of the conflict by focusing on local perceptions on Nyerere's involvement in the conflict. The article specifically looks at Banyakyusa whose position on both sides of Tanzania-Malawi border placed them at the centre of military and political matters during the conflict. The article examines the depiction of Banyakyusa voice, beliefs, and point view embedded in their myths to recreate Nyerere's image with reference to his involvement in the conflict. As per Banyakyusa, Banda's desire to extend his leadership beyond Malawi was a key reason for the outbreak of Lake Nyasa border conflict. The article establishes that Banda claimed that the whole Lake Nyasa belongs to Malawi. He also claimed that Tanzanian regions along Lake Nyasa: Mbeya, Iringa, and Ruvuma are part of Malawi. Banyakyusa perceived that without Nyerere being supernatural and mystically endowed, the conflict would have led to the outbreak of armed war between the nations. With his mystical powers, Nyerere was able to know and stop all incidents which would have led to physical battle.

**Keywords:** Nyerere, Banda, Tanzania, Lake Nyasa conflict, Banyakyusa, myths

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\* Lecturer, Department of Literature, University of Dar es Salaam



## Background

One of the observable implications of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's splendid support to the decolonisation of African countries and his advocacy for peace and unity is a friendly relationship between Tanzania and other African countries, especially the neighbouring countries. Tanzania shares her borders with Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Congo DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya. Most of these neighbours gained their freedom with the support from Tanzania (Johnson, 2000; Mohiddin, 1999). However, Tanzania under Nyerere's leadership involved herself into two open conflicts with Uganda and Malawi.

Although the Tanzania-Malawi conflict over Lake Nyasa has not until now led to armed war—as opposed to that of Uganda which led to the Kagera War of 1978-1979, Yoon (2014) describes it as one of the longest border conflicts in Africa. Yoon clarifies that the conflict between Malawi and Tanzania originated from the Anglo-Germany agreement of 1890 also known as Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty. The treaty gave the whole North East part of Lake Nyasa which bordered the then German East Africa (Tanganyika) to Britain who were then colonising Malawi. Article 1(2) of the agreement states that the boundary between Malawi (Nyasaland) and Tanzania (Tanganyika) run:

To the south by the line that starts on the coast of the northern border of Mozambique Province and

follows the course of the Rovuma River [sic] to the point where the Messinge flows into the Nyasa. Turning north, it continues along the eastern, northern, and western shores of the lake until it reaches the northern bank of the mouth of the Songwe River (as cited in Yoon, 2014:81-82).

This article gave Malawi the ownership of Lake Nyasa up to north-eastern shores. However, as Yoon contends, Article 6 of the treaty allows the rectification of the boundary through agreement of the two parts (at the time Britain and Germany). Yoon adds that Tanzania bases on Article 6 of the treaty by advocating the shift of the boundary to the median through negotiation with Malawi.

According to Mayall (1973), despite the Heligoland treaty, the border line between Tanzania (Tanganyika) and Malawi has not been settled. From 1922, German East Africa (Tanganyika) was awarded to the British as mandatory territory which made both Tanganyika and Malawi (Nyasaland) to be under British domination. However, the confusion of the border line between Tanzania and Malawi which could then be solved by British colonialists was not settled. Mayall contends that with evidence “from the inconsistency of the maps used in both territories during the mandate, that there was, from the start, some confusion as to exactly where it (the border line) lay” (Mayall, 1973, p. 612). These misunderstandings were in both Tanzania (Tanganyika) and Malawi (Nyasaland) and as Mayall highlights the “official reports and

maps produced in the Nyasaland Protectorate during the 1920s and 1930s also show a middle line” (p. 623). Here, Mayall indicates that both Tanzanians and Malawians were not sure of where exactly the Lake Nyasa border line between Tanzania and Malawi should lie. As a result, despite the Heligoland Treaty, the conflict over Lake Nyasa border line, as Mayall signifies, results from uncertainty of where exactly the line should be in both countries.

In 1967, Tanzania officially claimed that the border should be at the median of the lake (Day, 1987; Mayall, 1973) Tanzania claimed that:

While Tanzania did not want an international issue to arise between countries sharing the waters of Lake Nyasa, she wished ‘to inform the Government of Malawi that Tanzania has no claim over the waters ‘of Lake Nyasa beyond the line running through the median of the Lake’, and that this line alone was recognised by Tanzania as the legal and just delineation between the two countries (Mayall, 1973, pp. 617-618).

Despite that Tanzanian submission, Mayall argues that the dispute over Lake Nyasa would remain inactive “if it had been ignored by President Banda” (p. 618). Banda outspokenly continued to insist that the border line should remain on the eastern shores as per 1890 Anglo-Germany Treaty (Mayall, 1973; Yoon, 2014). He emphasised that Lake Nyasa/Malawi always belonged to Malawi and that Malawi was not ready for

any discussion and negotiation intended to alter the position of the border as it was set by Heligoland Treaty of 1890. Here, as Mayall (1973) indicates, the Tanzania-Malawi border conflict became active because Banda promulgated it and closed the negotiation door.

**Figure 1:** Disputed Malawi-Tanzania Border



**Source:** Tanzanian Affairs (<https://www.tzaffairs.org/2012/09/malawi-tanzania-border-dispute/>)

As Kenneth (2016) clarifies, the conflict became stiff in 1968 with deteriorated communication between two leaders, Nyerere of Tanzania and Banda of Malawi. The year 1968 witnessed these leaders attacking each other through the media. The attacks began after Banda declared that some Tanzanian regions especially Mbeya, Iringa (before being divided into Iringa and Njombe regions), and Ruvuma which border with the lake are parts of Malawi (Kenneth, 2016; Mayall, 1973). Later, Nyerere referred to Banda as insane by which

Banda responded by calling Nyerere “a coward and a communist inspired jellyfish” (Mayall, 1973:620). Mayall clarifies more that in the same year 1968, the two countries “were preparing for military show-down” (p. 620). Whereas Banda decided to put a gunboat in the lake, Tanzania “embarked upon a programme of military and political education amongst the villagers along the lake shore” (p. 620). According to Zotto (2017), Banda formed a paramilitary group of youth known as Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) and stationed them in Karonga District to safeguard the Malawi-Tanzania border. Similarly, Tanzania recruited “youth and able-bodied adults and turned them into militias” (Zotto, 2017, p. 155). Mayall (1973) and Zotto (2017) indicate that the 1967-1968 phase of the Lake Nyasa border conflict nearly led to an outbreak of the militarily war between Tanzania and Malawi.

According to Mayall (1973), Tanzania and Malawi have had unsettled relationship since independence. Mayall links Banda’s association with South African minority rule, Banda’s allegation that Tanzania and Nyerere himself were supporting Malawian exiles to overthrow his government, with the Lake Nyasa border conflict (Mayall 1973:611). These issues were inseparable because Banda’s support to Boers in South Africa made Nyerere who opposed the South African Boer’s government to host Banda’s oppositions. Also, Banda’s relationship with minority rule in South Africa and the existence of Malawian exiles in Tanzania who challenged Banda’s policies over Lake Nyasa made Nyerere easily provoked to officially declare the Lake Nyasa’s border conflict in 1967. Mayall contentions indicate that although the geographical location of the Tanzania-Malawi border attracts

**Figure 2:** Mbeya, Iringa and Ruvuma Regions in Tanzania which Banda declared 1968 to be part of Malawi



**Source:** Open Street Map contributors

tension between the two countries, the conflict of 1967-1968 was largely contributed to by Nyerere and Banda ideological and political differences.

With reference to Kenneth (2016) and Mayall (1973), Nyerere had two years after independence of Tanzania (Tanganyika) to raise issues against bilateral and international contracts and agreements entered by former colonial masters (Germany and later Britain). However, the years ended without Nyerere raising his concern on the Lake Nyasa border. This indicates that Tanzania literally agreed with the Heligoland agreement (Kenneth, 2016). Kenneth and Mayall's arguments highlight more on the argument that Tanzania's official proclamation of the Lake Nyasa border conflict in 1967 was rather a result of Nyerere and Banda political differences.

Misunderstandings between Nyerere and Banda had been more aggravated by Banda's decision to change the name of the Lake Nyasa to Lake Malawi in 1964 without consulting Nyerere and Mozambican leaders (Kenneth, 2016). Changing the name to Lake Malawi signified Malawi ownership of the lake. As a result, Nyerere "ordered the banning of all maps in Tanzania with the name 'Lake Malawi'" (p. 27). By banning the maps, Nyerere indicated that Tanzania did not agree with the perception that Lake Nyasa belonged to Malawi and obviously the shoreline border. Despite Nyerere's opposition, Lake Nyasa is still known as Lake Malawi in Malawi.

However, before the end of 1968, the Lake Nyasa conflict which became active and official from 1967 seized after Tanzania decided to "wait for the emergence in Malawi of a sensible leader" following the failure of negotiations with the then Malawian President Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Mayall, 1973, p. 620). As a result, from 1969 to 2010, the conflict was dormant (Kenneth, 2016). However, as Kenneth contends, following Malawi's intention to explore oil in Lake Nyasa, the conflict became active again from 2011.

One of the similarities of the studies reviewed above, Kenneth (2016), Mayall (1973), and Yoon (2014), is that they are based on politicians, historians, and academicians' perceptions. Despite their splendid contribution to the comprehension of the Lake Nyasa conflict, the studies do not involve the voice of local people, which is important in understanding their point of view and perceptions of the conflict.

In this article, I examine the Lake Nyasa conflict by focusing on the voice and perception of local people. Moreover, despite studies on Banyakyusa especially their oral literature such as Fedeo (2016), Mwakasaka (1977) and Wilson (1960), so far, none of the study examines the voice of Banyakyusa on the Lake Nyasa conflict. This article specifically looks at Banyakyusa beliefs, perceptions, voice, and point of view depicted in their myths about

Nyerere's involvement in the conflict. This study examines imagery language employed to reconstruct Nyerere's image and the Lake Nyasa conflict in selected Banyakyusa myths. Although the conflict "is still ongoing" (Yoon, 2014, p. 87), this study focuses on the myths associated with the 1967-1968 phase. During this phase, the conflict over Lake Nyasa boundary became active and official in post-colonial Tanzania under Nyerere and Malawi under Banda. As a result, this article provides the first insight of local people (Banyakyusa) to the conflict. The article sheds more light on Banyakyusa beliefs towards their (Tanzanian) territorial rights and borders.

Banyakyusa are important to this study because of their location. They are found in both countries, Tanzania and Malawi. In Tanzania, Banyakyusa live in Busokelo, Kyela, and Rungwe districts of Mbeya region. And in Malawi, Banyakyusa are in Karonga District. Banyakyusa in Kyela and Karonga live along shore plains of Lake Nyasa and along both sides of River Songwe which borders Tanzania and Malawi. By living on both sides of the River Songwe and along the shore plains of the Lake Nyasa, Banyakyusa are at the centre of the conflict (Mayall, 1973). The location made Banyakyusa witness underground and open Tanzania and Malawi military manoeuvres around the border. By using myths which were collected from Busokelo, Kyela and Rungwe districts, this

article focuses on the perceptions of Tanzanian Banyakyusa. The districts form an area which is referred to in Tanzania as a home place of Banyakyusa in Tanzania. In addition to Nyerere being at the centre of political myths and myth making in Tanzania (Phillips, 2015), the location of Banyakyusa is among the reasons for their mythmaking about Nyerere's involvement in the conflict.

### **Nyerere's Involvement in the Lake Nyasa Conflict as Reconstructed in Banyakyusa Myths**

As previously explained, the Lake Nyasa conflict nearly led to armed battle between Tanzania and Malawi in 1967 and 1968 (Mayall 1973). We have seen the way the relationship between the two neighbouring countries, especially their leaders, Nyerere and Banda, deteriorated. With Nyerere describing Banda as insane who also regarded Nyerere being cowardly, the possibility to end the Lake Nyasa conflict through negotiation was narrow. However, despite the deployment of soldiers around the River Songwe border, Banda putting gunboat in Lake Nyasa and Tanzania providing military trainings to villagers near to shores of Lake Nyasa and the River Songwe border, the 1967-1968 Lake Nyasa border conflict ended peacefully (Kenneth 2016; Mayall 1973; Zotto, 2017). Although Mayall (1973) associates the peaceful ending of Lake Nyasa border conflict with Tanzanian decision to wait for

a Malawian leader who will be able to negotiate, Banyakyusa associate the peaceful ending with Nyerere's supernatural and mythical powers.

This article discusses the association of Nyerere's supernatural and mystical abilities with the peaceful ending of the 1967-1968 phase of Lake Nyasa conflict in three Banyakyusa myths: *Banda*, *Indusu* (A Gun), and *Isomo Kubamalabbi* (A Lesson to Malawians).

The myth *Banda* narrates the origin of the Lake Nyasa conflict and its aftermath. We are told that this conflict has its origin in Banda's regime. Together with his claim that "*sumbi gwabo*" (the lake is theirs), "*Banda atile Kyela, Mwileje ummo, Rungwe, na Mbeya gwesa jo Malabbi. Atile aikwegha Mbeya na Iringa na Songea gwesa?*" (Banda claimed that Kyela, Ileje, Rungwe, and the whole Mbeya region is part of Malawi. He said he will take Mbeya, Iringa, and the whole Songea). Banda stressed that "*Ngulonda ukwegha sumbi gwesa na Mbeya na Iringa na Songea. Gwesa ujo jo Malabhi ntupu*" ("I want to take the whole lake and Mbeya and Iringa and Songea. The whole area is part of Malawi"). The narrator narrates that the Lake Nyasa conflict resulted from Banda's desire to control not only the whole lake but also Tanzanian regions along it. Stressing on the collaborative interplay between Banyakyusa myths about Nyerere and the literature about Nyerere's real life, Mayall (1973) asserts that in 1968, Banda, while pointing his hand to Tanzania

announced "that is my land over there, Tukya, [sic] Njombe and Songea, all of them must be given back" (p. 619). As a result of this, the narrator states that both Tanzania and Malawi were sending soldiers near River Songwe border which made Banyakyusa in Kyela to live under high tension.

We are told that Banda banned Tanzanians from fishing in the lake and seized Tanzanian's canoes, fish, and fish traps. The narrator further states that "*lelo tuta Nyerere bho apilike atile Banda ikunyangalila. Kali alipelengenywe bulebule loli bikuti aliipelile kajuni. Kapulwike kapelelisye amajeshi gosa aga Banda?*" (But when honourable Nyerere heard this, he said "Banda is joking with me". I don't know how he transformed himself. They say he transformed into a bird. That bird spied all Banda's military bases). After spying, Nyerere in bird's form found that Banda's army was "*nafyene*" (nothing). The word *nafyene* (nothing) as used here implies that Banda was to be ignored because he had no power to fight against Tanzanians. The narrator emphasises that "*amajeshi ga Banda gali mateta fijo ku gitu*" (Banda's soldiers were very weak compared to ours). As a result, *ingalamu* (the lion) Nyerere roared that Tanzanians should continue with regular activities in Lake Nyasa and that they should not fear anything. Although Banyakyusa as explained earlier were the most victims of the conflict (Mayall, 1973:20), the phrase "*mve Batanzania bandu bangu*" (my fellow Tanzanians) as used in this myth indicates that

Banyakuyusa regard themselves primarily as Tanzanians. As a result, the image of Nyerere as examined in this study expresses Banyakuyusa voice, beliefs, and perceptions of Nyerere based on his role in Tanzania in general as opposed to Banyakuyusa as an individual society. We are told in the myth that after Nyerere's direction, "*Banda akosomwilepo kangi? Ingalamu lingajigubwime kinyamana nki ikikusemela?*" (Did Banda cough again? When a lion roars which other animal approaches?). The above rhetorical questions indicate that Banda surrendered. The narrator states that after Nyerere's order to Tanzanians to continue fishing in Lake Nyasa, Malawians waited until his death to resume the conflict.

The myth *Banda* indicates that Nyerere used his mystical powers to cool down the 1967-1968 phase of the conflict. The narrator states that Nyerere mystically transformed into a bird to spy on Banda. To the Banyakuyusa, a bird is often used in narratives (myths, legends, and folktales) as a creature with supernatural power to rescue or save people from danger. By Nyerere changing into a bird, the myth implies that through his mystical abilities, Nyerere was able to spy on Banda and his army secretly and freely. As a result, Banda "*akakosomwilepo kangi*" (did not cough again) which denotes that he ceased his claim over the lake and Tanzanian regions along it. As already pointed out, Mayall contends that the 1967-1968 phase of the dispute ceased following Tanzania's

decision to "wait for the emergence in Malawi of a sensible leader" (Mayall, 1973, p. 620). With reference to the myth *Banda*, Mayall indicates that Tanzanians considered Banda as weak militarily and mentally; hence, incapable of fighting against Tanzania as well as negotiating a resolution of the conflict.

Of a particular interest in this myth is the metaphorical reconstruction of Nyerere as a lion. The narrator states that "*po ingalamu jagulumwe ikisu kyalimiee. Jatile "mve Batanzania bandu bangu mutinga pasyaga Banda nteta fijo akabagila ukubomba nasimo. Mulimege na kuloba isamaki mwa sumbi"* (then the lion roared and the whole world trembled. He said "my fellow Tanzanians don't worry; Banda is very weak; he cannot do anything. Continue farming and fishing in the lake). The metaphor of lion as used in this myth indicates that Nyerere was very powerful and feared. The myth implies that Banda surrendered his claims because he feared Nyerere's powers. Moreover, as Frye (1957) contends, an archetype of a lion stands "for the vision of the royal" (p. 153). Frye's contention indicates that metaphorical comparison of Nyerere to a lion gives Nyerere a royal status to everyone including Malawians and Banda. With such royal status, the myth denotes that Banda had no choice but to obey Nyerere by withdrawing his claims. According to the myth, the conflict resumed in 2011 (Kenneth, 2016, p. 28) because Malawians waited "*mpaka afwile Nyerere lo ulu baandile kang?*" (... until Nyerere died to start the claim again). The

implication is that Malawians remained calm to Tanzanian activities in Lake Nyasa from 1969 to 2010 because they feared Nyerere's mystical powers.

Despite a peaceful end to the 1967-1968 phase of the Lake Nyasa conflict, the myth *Indusu* (A Gun) suggests that there were signs of armed conflict, and that the peaceful end was only a result of Nyerere's mystical powers. *Indusu* (A Gun) is a myth about a gun which was grabbed by Malawians from a Tanzanian border guard. The narrator relates the story of the gun to Nyerere's stick which was stolen but returned to Nyerere by the thieves (the myths about thieves of Nyerere's stick is one among widespread myths about Nyerere in Tanzania). The gun was grabbed from a Zanzibari who was among the guards at the Tanzania-Malawi border in Kyela. According to the narrator, a young man from Songwe on the Malawi side grabbed a gun from the Zanzibari guard. The young man was a Nyakyusa from Malawi, a son of Mwambila. After grabbing that gun, the young man handed it to Malawian soldiers who took it to Blantyre, Malawi.

When he heard that the gun was taken by Malawian soldiers, "Nyerere *asekile fiyo. Atile "ajikwisa. Ajikwisa kagi bila mafuku. Atile une Banda atutikwelewana mpaka indusu jangu jibuje. Kangi syosyosa sila asikusokela loli indusu jibuje kangi bila koonangika"* (Nyerere laughed so much. He said that "it will come. It will come without sweating". He said that "I will not

be in good relationship with Banda until my gun returns. Anything can happen until the gun returns without being distorted"). The phrase *ajikwisa bila mafuku* (It will come without sweating) indicates that Nyerere was not considering the use of force to get the gun back. According to the myth, what happened to Banda is still unknown but he was compelled to return the gun to Dar es Salaam. The narrator concludes that "*kingamo Banda syalimwagile inyali fiyo. Aliitike mwene amaka ga Nyerere. Aliitike ukuti Nyerere akaligwakunkinila*" (Perhaps Banda experienced something very bad and surrendered to Nyerere's power. He accepted that Nyerere was not a man to joke with).

The gun in the myth under discussion symbolises valuable things which were allegedly taken by Malawian soldiers from Tanzania. The myth indicates that despite Banda surrendering his claims over Lake Nyasa, Malawian soldiers grabbed and confiscated valuable things from Tanzania during the conflict, especially in the area near River Songwe border. It is implied in the myth *Indusu* (A Gun) that the actions of the Malawian soldiers along the border could have led to physical confrontation if Nyerere had not abstained from using force. As already explained, Nyerere decided that the gun would be returned without sweating, which indicates that he intended to solve the conflict with Malawi without entering into war.

Despite Nyerere's refusal to use military force against Malawi, the myth under discussion denotes that his mystical powers were used against Banda. The narrator states that, "*po basi po na isi syamuagile Banda sikamanyigwa loli ikabidi apimbe indusu mundege ukwisa ukujitwala kwiikulu ku Dar es Salaam... Aliitike mwene amaka ga Nyerere*" (What faced Banda is still unknown but he was compelled to carry that gun in a plane up to state house in Dar es Salaam ... He himself surrendered to Nyerere's power). Here, the myth establishes a connection between the peaceful return of the gun and Nyerere's mystical power. Also, the uncertainty of the narrator on what exactly happened to Banda further suggests that Nyerere used his mystical powers. Therefore, the myth *Indusu* denotes that Nyerere had very powerful mystical powers which led to Banda "...*syalimwagile inyali fijo*" (experienced something very bad), and the gun dispute ended peacefully.

The myth *Isomo Kubamalabhi* (A Lesson to Malawians), on the other hand, indicates that the 1967-1968 phase of Lake Nyasa conflict ended peacefully because Malawians learnt that Nyerere was better than Banda. This myth is about Nyerere helping villagers in Malawi who were attacked by Tanzanian soldiers during the conflict. The narrator states that at the time when Banda was claiming Lake Nyasa, Mbeya, Iringa, and Songea (Ruvuma) regions are part of Malawi, the Tanzanian soldiers who were guarding the River Songwe border bombed a village in Malawi. After the

bombing, cows from the Malawian side crossed the river to the Tanzanian side. Also, villagers fled from their homes, leaving everything behind. The narrator states that "*po Nyerere kali amenye bulebule. Alikudasalamu loli asimenye syosya isi abanajeshi bambombaga mwasongwe. Alinamanga gake itolo jula*" (I don't know how Nyerere knew that event. He was in Dar es Salaam but he knew all what the soldiers were doing in Songwe. He had his own magic). Banyakyusa use the word *amanga* to refer to mystical powers. Here, the narrator indicates that Nyerere knew about the bombing incident mystically. The narrator clarifies that Nyerere "*aketaga ni syamungisi papo na bapelelesi bakabagile ukumbula mbimbibhi lula*" (...was able to see what happens in darkness since even his spies could not tell him as promptly as that). The narrator uses the phrase *aketaga ni syamungisi* (he able to see what happens in the darkness) to indicate that Nyerere was mystically able to know everything including hidden and secret happenings.

Following the incident, we are told that Nyerere ordered Tanzanian soldiers to guard the Malawian's cows and keep safe all properties of the villagers who had fled. The narrator states that, "*bho babujile balinkwaga ifindu fyabo filipo fyosa. Kila kitu kilisalama kabisa. Bakomigwe ni kiswigo*" (When the villagers returned, they found all their properties safe. Everything was safe. They were surprised). Here, the narrator implies that following the hostile relationship between Tanzania and Malawi, villagers expected that

Nyerere would order his soldiers to seize all Malawian properties. After finding all their properties safe, the villagers praised Nyerere. As a result:

*Banda apondilwe amasyu agakubabula abhandu bake ukuti balwege ivita na Nyerere. Namanga po baliandile ukuti "Nyerere jo ndongosi loli. Atikwifuna ikutula abandu bosa. Bule linga alijo Banda gwitu apa natigi poa ngali atugogile twesa".* (Banda lacked words to tell his people to fight a war against Nyerere since they were saying "Nyerere is a perfect leader. He is not proud and he helps all people. If this incident was under Banda, he would have killed all of us").

The narrator indicates that Malawians denied Banda the support that he needed to fight against Nyerere, because for them, Nyerere was a better and more compassionate leader than Banda.

The myth *Isomo Kubamalabhi* (A Lesson to Malawians) gives the actual picture of the Lake Nyasa conflict. Similar to the myth *Indusu* (A Gun), the myth *Isomo Kubamalabhi* indicates that there were elements of physical confrontation in the 1967-1968 phase of the Lake Nyasa conflict. The act of Tanzanian soldiers throwing a bomb to a village in Malawi indicates that there could have been acts of military aggression against Malawi. However, by Nyerere directing Tanzanian soldiers to keep Malawian properties safe, he ensured that the Lake Nyasa conflict did not involve the ordinary citizens. According to Mayall (1973), Tanzania considered that the conflict was caused by Banda's insanity.

Mayall implies that the conflict was not between people of Tanzania and Malawi but between Tanzania and Banda. And according to this myth, Banda did not get the support of Malawians to continue with his claim over the lake.

The myth under discussion also suggests that Nyerere's mystical power prevented the outbreak of war between Tanzania and Malawi. As explained earlier, Tanzania soldiers bombing a village in Malawi was a direct act of war; but as the narrator states, Nyerere, through his mystical powers, realised immediately what his soldiers had done. Here, the myth indicates that the soldiers bombed Malawi without Nyerere's consent. And if Nyerere had not known about the incident immediately, the soldiers would have harassed the villagers, and Malawians would be compelled to fight back. The implication of the story is that Nyerere's mystical powers enabled him to immediately learn of his soldiers' actions, which enabled him to prevent escalation in the conflict.

According to Trubshaw (2003), myths are narratives which are believed in societies of their origin as unquestioned truth. And according to Jaja (2013, p. 10), myths, especially in Africa, are "not just a product of human imagination but a direct expression of reality". Jaja adds that African myths – like those of Banyakyusa – "represent the African spirit and the African view of reality" (Jaja 2013:13). Trubshaw and Jaja's contentions indicates that the myths

analysed in this article are believed by the Banyakyusa as true narrations about Nyerere and the Lake Nyasa conflict. To Banyakyusa, the 1967-1968 phase of the conflict ended peacefully because of Nyerere's mystical abilities.

The myths *Banda*, *Indusu*, and *Isomo Kubamalabbi* indicate that some actions which were done by Banda, Malawian soldiers, and Tanzanian border guards could have led the two countries into a war. But, Nyerere's supernatural ability, which enabled him to spy over Banda's military powers and Tanzania soldiers' actions at the border, made the conflict cease peacefully. Banyakyusa further believe that the conflict resumed in 2011 following the death of Nyerere in 1999. Nyerere, whose mystical powers both Banda and Malawians had feared, was now gone. As a result, Malawians felt they could resume their claims.

## Conclusion

According to Banyakyusa's point of view expressed through their myths, Banda's lust to extend his rule beyond Malawi was a key reason for the outbreak of the Lake Nyasa conflict. With determination to monopolise the whole lake, Banda tried to grab and establish his leadership in Tanzanian regions along the lake: Mbeya, Iringa (including the part which is currently Njombe region), and Ruvuma (Songea). As a result, both Tanzania and Malawi put their soldiers to guard the River Songwe border.

This border divides Banyakyusa into two: Tanzanians and Malawians. As such, the Lake Nyasa conflict made Banyakyusa, to a large extent, primary victims of the military actions along the border.

Banyakyusa believe, through their myths, that military actions along the River Songwe border stiffened the Lake Nyasa conflict. The acts of border guards both Tanzanian and Malawian, would have led to an outbreak of a war between the two nations if Nyerere had not been endowed with supernatural and mystic powers. Banyakyusa believe that Nyerere was endowed with massive supernatural and mystical powers by which he was able to spy over the Malawian army after transforming himself into a bird. Also, the powers enabled Nyerere to know on the spot and stop dangerous acts of Tanzania border guards to Malawians. On Banda's side, Nyerere's supernatural and mystical powers made him fear, obey, and respect Nyerere. As a result, Banda surrendered his claims over Lake Nyasa and the Tanzanian regions along it.

Generally, Banyakyusa believe that the conflict over Lake Nyasa resumed in 2011 following the death of Nyerere in 1999. This is because the myths discussed in this section, especially *Banda*, designate that Malawians respected and feared Nyerere's mystical powers. As a result, Malawians had to wait for Nyerere's death to resume their claims.

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