

The World Arrived in Books: Part 2

[1] When Thiga was a baby his mother took him and ran away from his father who was a gluttonous misogynist piece of shit. She managed to relocate them in another land far away from him. I think the husband was a kind of giant. Many years passed in bliss and the mother thrived as Thiga grew up to become one of the most handsome and strongest men in the village. He is described as having had many girlfriends. One day his mother took him up the hill near their hut and showed him a massive stone that was wedged firmly into the earth. The stone seemed to have been there for a very long time because its exterior was weathered greatly and had turned some parts of the rock shiny and smooth.

Thiga's mother then proceeded to ask him to move the stone and bring her what lay underneath it. Thiga loved his mother more than anything. She'd been the one constant person in his life and he'd have done anything for her. So he went, stretched, placed his hands on the stone and planted his feet firmly on the ground. The stone did not even budge. He tried again and again and again. Nothing. Days passed with no success but still he persisted. He soon realized that as strong as he was, he was just not strong enough to move the stone. So he started training and challenging all the lads in the village to sword fights and wrestling matches. (He never challenged any women). He beat them all, grew more stronger but still he could not move the stone. When no one else was challenging him anymore, he went into the forest and fought with wild animals. First with a weapon, then without a weapon. He still couldn't move the stone. Years had passed at this point and his mother was getting older and losing hope until one day...

Table of contents

- The immovable rock
- What Thiga found under the rock
- The mountain giant
- Another escape
- The palace of torture
- The gaily dressed murderer
- The three-eyed giant
- Thiga reaches his fathers' kingdom

Some Kenyan scientists[2] have described *Point Zero* as the center of the universe. It's supposed to be the path that offers the easiest route into outer space. Cartographers acting on behalf of the queen back then made these calculations and settled on the location of the monument. Ok, center of the universe might be a stretch but hey, the sheer fact that these scientists are floating around these theories is levels of imagination we were never allowed to aspire to.

The novel *Walenisi*^[3] offers another instance of sci-fi glory and magical realism. Dzombo, the protagonist, is sentenced to death and subsequently put in a space ship that is to catapult him into space, killing him instantly. However, this does not happen and instead the vessel takes him to a different planet called *Walenisi*. The novel is about the intellectual awakening experienced by Dzombo in this new world. *Walenisi* serves as a purgatory of sorts because Earth is constantly referred to as hell while there is a constant wondering of what heaven is. In the end we see Dzombo addressing his pregnant wife, Bi Fikirini whom he met there. He expresses his desire to return to Earth and enlighten his people to which his wife greatly encourages as if she had anticipated this moment all along. It is also implied that the journey would likely be fatal and they might never make it back to *Walenisi*.

Dzombo gives up a good life in a thriving faraway planet and risks his own life and that of his pregnant wife to go back to an Earth that sentenced him to death, so that he can tell of these great wonders. Miss me with that nonsense. There are some great takeaways from Mkangi's depiction of *Walenisi* as utopia. While he reminds us that capitalism, class and patriarchal structures still exist, he elevates Bi Fikirini and all the *Walenisian* women and portrays them as liberated, intelligent, fearless and no nonsense. Mkangi dedicated this book to his wife, Kaendi Munguti.

Notes:

[1] *The Adventures of Thiga* (p.1971) by C.M Mureithi

[2] <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000069887/forgotten-monument-that-holds-secrets-to-pre-independent-kenya>

[3] *Walenisi* (p.1995) in *Kiswahili* by Katama Mkangi